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2017 Vol 47

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ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES

Asian Highlands Perspectives (AHP) is a trans-disciplinary journal focusing on the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding regions, including the Southeast Asian Massif, Himalayan Massif, the Extended Eastern Himalayas, the Mongolian Plateau, and other contiguous areas. The editors believe that cross-regional commonalities in history, culture, language, and socio-political context invite investigations of an interdisciplinary nature not served by current academic forums. *AHP* contributes to the regional research agendas of Sinologists, Tibetologists, Mongolists, and South and Southeast Asianists, while also forwarding theoretical discourse on grounded theory, interdisciplinary studies, and collaborative scholarship.

AHP publishes occasional monographs and essay collections both in hardcopy (ISSN 1835-7741) and online (ISSN 1925-6329). The online version is an open access source, freely available at <https://goo.gl/JOeYnq>. The print edition is available to libraries and individuals at-cost through print on demand publisher Lulu.com at <https://goo.gl/rIT9lI>. The journal currently has a core editorial team of four members and a consultative editorial board of twenty-five experts from a variety of disciplines. All submissions to the journal are peer-reviewed by the editorial board and independent, anonymous assessors.

AHP welcomes submissions from a wide range of scholars with an interest in the area. Given the dearth of current knowledge on this culturally complex area, we encourage submissions that contain descriptive accounts of local realities - especially by authors from communities in the Asian Highlands - as well as theory-oriented articles. We publish items of irregular format - long articles, short monographs, photo essays, fiction, auto-ethnography, and so on. Authors receive a PDF version of their published work. Potential contributors are encouraged to consult previous issues.

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MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES

COURAGE TO HOPE

Pad+ma dbang chen དཔའ་མ་དབང་ཆེན

My name is Pad+ma dbang chen and I was born in 1990 in Reb sa Village, Hor nag (Huangnaihe) Township, Reb gong (Tongren) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. Children my age often asked old men to tell them stories and an old man who knew many folktales told me the one I give below.

My village is located atop a mountain and, years ago, transportation was inconvenient. Only motorcycles could navigate the zigzagging, narrow track that twisted up the mountain. My village was an agro-pastoral area and Grandmother and Mother were occupied with farming.

Some small creeks are near my village. People did not drink this water because it is too salty. Instead, women went down the mountain to fetch water from a spring. They tied two white plastic containers to a donkey and spent half a day to fetch water. We also offered visitors this water.

Family members usually drank rainwater that was collected in summer in a big concrete, underground box in the center of our courtyard. Mother stretched a big square cloth in the courtyard, tying the corners with a rope and then to poles. A big stick was put in the center of the cloth above the reservoir opening. When it rained, water ran to the stick and dripped into the hole.

Our life was very poor. My family had about one hundred sheep, twenty goats, some cattle, and two mules. Grandfather grazed livestock on steep mountains and hills a two-hour walk from my village.

Grandmother (Sangs rgyas mtsho, 1938-2016) told me this story in 2013. It includes both happiness and suffering. The period of starvation that she experienced as an adult was especially dire. Half of

her life was full of extreme trials. Nevertheless, she never stopped struggling to maintain her own life and the well-being of her family. She saved the younger generations of our family. She is a true heroine.

I am Sangs rgyas mtsho. I was born in 1938 in Phyi skor Village, which is situated in the south of Smad pa Township in Reb gong.

There were no natural disasters such as earthquakes, droughts, floods, and so on. And there were no man-made disasters such as conflicts, struggles, and torments at that time. Everything was like flowers blossoming in a pleasant garden, with birds chirping freely in the boundless turquoise-colored, dust-free sky, with honeybees pollinating various beautiful blooming flowers.

People were gathered, sitting in front of the *ma Ni* hall chanting, chatting, and boasting. They were optimistic because they were not worried about food and clothes for family members. They had excellent life conditions. On every villager's face was a sweet smile and a satisfied expression. Old men and women chanted scriptures and spun prayer wheels in the *ma Ni* hall while gossiping about a bride who had had an affair with a Muslim merchant.

"How incredible life is!" an old woman with a wrinkled face said, shaking her head.

They misunderstood Buddha's teachings that tell us how to be better and to not gossip, deceive, steal, and so on. Some blame themselves for having no good fortune and destiny, wishing for a better life. Certainly, the bottomless pit of human ambition is never filled.

My family consisted of my parents, older brother, older sister, and me. We were a well-off family because Father was a successful merchant. He bought wooden water buckets, saddles, plows, and such things from Bla brang and sold them to the local people. He profited a lot from selling these products. My family had twenty-five *mu*¹ of land and some cows, so we had plenty of grain. We also sold several old cows every year.

¹ 1.7 hectares.

Father also secretly cultivated poppies in our yard. When autumn approached, we cut the flower pods and collected the gum that seeped out. We dried the gum on a thin piece of square metal in a shady place of our family compound. The last task was to grind this dry material in a stone with a hole in the middle using a small smooth stone, and then put it in a clean bag. Father privately sold this powder to Chinese businessmen and this generated a lot of money. Local people did not know Father did this. The yearly earnings from this allowed us to buy coral and pearl ornaments. Each of my family members also had their own sheep-skin robe.

One day, Older Sister took Father's dagger to cut a poppy pod. Milky liquid seeped out. She held up a short stem of wheat and covered one end with a little cloth. She sucked the milk into the wheat stem, and covered the other end with a small piece of cloth. We could thus store the poppy milk in good condition.

She took me to the herding place to look for wild mushrooms. We soon found a big one. Sister washed it and then injected the poppy milk into the mushroom, smeared yak butter on it, and grilled it on a little fire. The mushroom became much smaller after it was cooked. A nice aroma filled the air. She divided it into two pieces, which we ate. The mushroom had a pleasant flavor that I had never tasted before.

Some women in our own village worked for my family doing farm work, herding the cows, and doing all our family chores. They also looked after Sister and me. We were energetic children because we focused on playing and eating. These workers prepared milk tea, roasted barley flour, and made meat dumplings. There was no work for me to do. It was the same for Brother and Older Sister. Father was often gone on business while Mother managed the workers and family matters. I was astonished that some of my peers worked hard with their parents. I was seven years old at that time and I did not understand why my friends worked like that.

In 1948, I was ten and my family circumstances changed a little because of a drought. However, Father's savings sustained us.

My family had extra money and grain to lend to villagers at interest. I was proud of having such a great father whose cleverness meant we did not suffer. Jealousy was an obstacle for everything. Father's ability and success meant that villagers resented him.

That hot summer, some officials came to my village to recruit several new soldiers. Unfortunately, Father was on the list of candidates. The managers privately investigated those on the list and planned to make an announcement two days later. Father anxiously returned home. He was depressed. Mother pulled him into a room and quietly talked about something that we could not overhear. Sister and I concentrated on listening but heard and understood nothing about the situation Father was in. Sister said that something had happened in Father's business, but we were too young to comprehend such things.

A clanging cymbal broke the tranquility of the morning. We were trained to gather in the *ma Ni* hall whenever we heard that sound. Father stopped eating and went out. The officials chose the soldiers and announced their names in front of the villagers. Father was selected, which meant that he would join the army. The meeting finished and villagers returned to their homes. Mother's eyes were red and she wore an anxious expression.

Father now had an army uniform and a hat. Older Sister and I were confused about Mother's unusual behavior. The army uniform also surprised us because we had never seen clothes so perfectly designed.

Father was to leave a month later. He was also ordered to wear the uniform in the village. The morning Father was getting ready to leave, he commanded, "You girls listen to your Mother and don't play all the time. We now have no workers and you two must do family chores with your Mother. Rin chen rgyal, you are seventeen and my only son. Take my position and keep the family in the same condition. You are now a man and the pillar of the family. A wise man does not ask his father to resolve problems when he reaches the age

of fifteen. I am going somewhere to help our fellow people who have difficulties. After the problems are solved, I will soon return."

He left without another word. We watched him until he vanished from our vision. Tears shone in Mother's eyes. We three children waved the sleeves of our robes as Father left.

Our life changed after Father's departure. Villagers did not return the money Father had lent them. Our situation got progressively worse. Brother tried his best to get the money we were owed, but he was unsuccessful. Villagers always postponed the time of repayment.

Four months passed in the blink of an eye. There was no sign of Father. My concern grew ever larger. When I asked Mother what had happened to Father, she said that he would return soon, but her depressed expression told me there was a secret we children did not know. I repeatedly begged and screamed at Mother to tell me the truth. Finally, she said, "Your Father has gone to Lha sa to fight. An old man said Tibetans and another nationality had an argument over territory and we must eliminate evil people from Lha sa. I don't know what consequences this fighting will bring to Tibetans. But we cannot forget what your Father said and we must keep our promises. You don't need to worry about your Father, he is a brave man."

Brother was deep in thought and Older Sister fell into sorrow and despair. From that day on, laughter and smiles were absent in my home. Brother encouraged himself to focus on the family business. Mother said he was now a man. Sister and I helped Mother with family chores and farm work. Our neighbors spread rumors that Father had died. The fires of indignation exploded in Brother and he wanted to teach them a lesson, but Mother stopped him, fearing that he would cause great trouble. If something happened to Brother, our family line would vanish forever.

We constantly anticipated the day Father would come home. Our expectation resembled that of a man dying of thirst. My heart seemed to have been pierced by a knife. I was in excruciating pain. I regretted having been born a human. A terrible sensation rose in my

mind. I was afraid that my yearning for Father might be an empty longing.

One morning, I accidentally discovered that Mother's pillow gave off a sour smell and resembled a map, stained by her tears. I could not imagine how many nights she had been in agony, worried about Father. The moon had become her only nocturnal acquaintance. She heard gusts of wind outside and had thoughts deep in her mind. Some nights she could not overcome her painful thoughts of Father, took a sharp needle, and stabbed her index finger. She thought the blood that flowed out would alleviate her mental pain. Nevertheless, she wore a blissful smile and did her best to conceal her mental anguish.

Every night, Sister had a nightmare in which she called to Father in her sleep. Tears trickled from her eyes. Mother wiped them away with her right palm, embraced her, and stroked her head gently. Mother's tears streamed down her own face at such moments. She then began paying homage to Buddha every night.

Mother thought I was sleeping, but I privately sobbed sorrowfully beneath my quilt. I bit my lips to control my emotion. I did not want Mother to have extra worries because of me. Sometimes I thought women had nothing but tears.

•••

Three years faded away like a flash of lightning. I was now thirteen years old and perceived the true essence of life. There was no permanent happiness and no temporary sadness. Everything changed without reason.

News spread in the village that Father would soon return. My family was happy, even though we knew it might not be true. Brother went to the county town to inquire about Father. A carpenter from Bla brang said, "A mdo soldiers in Lha sa will soon return because the Tibetan army was defeated."

Brother laughed when he heard the news.

The carpenter was upset and murmured, "You laugh. I want to cry."

Brother could not figure out why the carpenter had said that, but he thanked him anyway.

Brother returned and informed us of the good news, which made us feel as though a butter lamp had been lit in a dark room. Mother removed her disguise and an unprecedented, truly happy smile emerged on her tanned face. Sister's appetite increased. She ate three bowls of noodles that night. How happy my family had become! My own little world became a fantasy garden and I had sweet dreams that night.

The moon no longer held Mother's attention that night. She fell asleep feeling wonderful. Brother's snores made me feel comfortable. I had not heard that sound for a long time.

The days passed, Father did not return, and then one morning our dog barked crazily outside. I heard a door squeaking open. I guessed Brother had gone out to see what the dog was barking about.

Three women beggars and a little boy were at our gate. Their hair was in braids, wrapped around their head. Hunger had cracked their dry lips. The little boy wheezed like an old man with bad lungs. Their faces were dark and spotted with mud. They wore tattered robes and were emaciated.

Brother was astonished to see such people and asked in surprise, "Where are you from?"

"We come from Lha sa," the oldest woman replied politely.

Brother comprehended what they were saying, though they spoke in a different dialect.

He asked, "Why do you come here? Are your relatives living here?"

"We are refugees. Many outsiders came to our land. Tibetan governors fought each other over property and territory. Everything was in disorder in Lha sa," the woman standing in the middle said desperately in a mix of A mdo and her own dialect, "We found a fortuneteller who told us that A mdo was a safer place to live. We escaped and have come here. Could you give us some food? My son has not eaten for two days."

Mother gave them *rtsam pa* and milk tea. After the meal, the little boy immediately became energetic and vigorously spoke in his dialect. They thanked Mother and bowed their heads.

"Do you know any A mdo soldiers?" Mother asked

"We heard that many A mdo soldiers came to Lha sa. I don't know any soldiers, but we saw an A mdo soldier team returning to their homes. There were about twenty handsome, strong guys in that group," responded the woman who could speak some A mdo.

Mother happily inquired if they had seen a man like Father and described him in detail.

They nodded their heads uncertainly. After a long talk, they got ready to leave. Mother wanted them to stay in our home for some days, but they insisted on going to the county town, which they thought was the best place to take refuge.

Mother wanted to ensure Father was alive and consulted a local fortuneteller. He fingered his prayer beads and said, "Your husband is in danger. Invite some men in your village to chant *Gdugs dkar chen mo* one hundred times. Next, climb up a holy mountain, burn *bsang* 'incense', and offer *rlung rta* 'wind horses', and then his situation will return to normal. Do it as soon as possible."

Mother thanked him, offered him a *kha btags*, and gave him some butter.

She returned home and did exactly as he had suggested. We put Father's karma and destiny in the hands of Buddha, hoping that Father would overcome the difficulties.

That night, Mother's nocturnal acquaintance experienced an eclipse, plunging our world in darkness. Villagers climbed up on the roofs of their houses using wooden ladders and prostrated to the moon. Some burned *bsang* and blew white conches as dogs barked loudly. Some set off firecrackers. All the village women chanted *ma Ni* melodies. When the moon is eaten by a demon, religious activities expel the demon and the moon soon reappears. Two hours later, the moon shone again and we all happily went back to bed.

Mother was deep in thought. When I asked Mother what she was thinking about, she said desperately, "The moon has given me an omen. I must beseech Mtsho sngon po 'Qinghai Lake' to protect your father!"

"Does a lake have such power? It's impossible that a lake can help Father," I said.

Sister pinched my arm and blinked at me, but I had no clue what she meant.

"We are Buddhists and cannot disbelieve a lake as holy as Mtsho sngon po. I will now tell you a story about Mtsho sngon po," Mother responded piously:

Long ago, King Srong btsan sgam po's clever general, Mgar stong btsan, neglected imperial rule. The king was enraged, gouged out the general's eyes, and banished him from Lha sa. The general had a son who took him to where Mtsho sngon po is now. At that time, there was no lake, only an enormous, boundless grassland. When they reached that place, they were very thirsty and lacked energy. The general asked his son to describe the place. His son complied, giving an exact description. The general instructed, "Go east to a well with a big stone lid. Water will flow out after you remove the stone lid. Be sure to put it back."

His son went there, drank all the water he wanted, and returned. But he forgot to replace the stone lid on the hole. After some moments, flood-like water swirled out of the hole.

"Run as quickly as possible!" the general said hoarsely.

The son was very strong, put his father on his back, and trotted up holy Gser chen Mountain. They sheltered there, watching thousands of nomad households destroyed by the water. Meanwhile, Master Padmasambhava in India saw this miserable disaster, invoked magic, and threw Mahadeva Mountain to stop up the hole. This formed the island, Mtsho snying 'Heart of the Lake', which we can now see.

After that entertaining story, Older Sister and I fell asleep.

Early the next morning, Mother quickly made an offering bag containing five kinds of grains, cloth of five colors, juniper, and a little bit of gold wrapped in a *kha btags*. If such offerings are thrown into Mtsho sngon po, it brings good fortune. Mother hoped this would keep Father safe.

Brother and Mother set out on for Mtsho sngon po. This trip would take many days. Sister and I stayed at home.

Late one night, some young village men came and stood outside our bedroom and talked, flirting with Sister.

"Let go of your arrogance! Your father won't return. Your family is not rich anymore. I'm interested in you. If you agree, please open the door," one young man said.

"You are unqualified to make judgments about my father whose heart is with the Tibetan people. He will live as a hero and die as a hero. You are cowards. It's better to shut your stinking mouth. One day, Father will come home and I'm sure you will be the first to lick his feet," Sister replied indignantly.

They were enraged, yelled at Sister, and then they left cursing.

Days passed as rapidly as a stream without looking back. Mother and Brother still had not returned. Sister and I were concerned that something bad had happened to them. We were annoyed that those guys came to our home every night. We were determined to find Mother and Brother, but we also had lots of work to do, so we stayed at home.

Days passed and then one hot summer day, Mother and Brother returned from Mtsho sngon po. Their horses were wet with sweat. Smelly vapor swirled in the air. Brother unsaddled the horses and took them into the stable to rest and eat fresh grass that Sister had cut on a grassland far from our home.

Mother was tired and thirsty, but her expression told me she was happy. I ran to Mother and threw myself into her warm arms, embracing her tightly. After feeding the horses, Brother came and softly stroked my head. Sister stood behind me as I quietly sobbed.

Mother recounted everything they had seen on the way to Mtsho sngon po and back. She truly believed that Father would be safe. She had put Father's destiny into the hands of the Buddha, who, if he had great power as people said, would demonstrate his power to us and save Father's life.

Mother managed the family businesses after returning. She attempted to force the villagers to return the cash, wheat flour, butter, and wooden tools they had borrowed or bought from us. Though Mother was intelligent enough to execute the family business, she had no strategy to get our money and property back from the villagers.

We lacked cash so Mother concentrated on getting the money that Father had lent to various villagers. She also wanted to show that she could manage everything without Father, otherwise we would be held in utter contempt by others. After long deliberation, she decided to engage Brother to a pretty girl who was a village leader's daughter.

Brother was old enough to marry and Mother was afraid that he would be negatively affected if his marriage was delayed. If villagers spread gossip and rumors, nobody would want to marry him.

Mother went to the county town with our neighbor, Tshe ba, to purchase a box of liquor, a carton of cigarettes, some *kha btags*, a roll of *prug* 'wool cloth for making robes', and one sheep carcass.

After returning home, Mother invited an eloquent man from a neighboring village and another old man who had an excellent relationship with the leader's family. Mother sent them with the presents she had purchased to discuss the wedding. When the two men offered gifts, Uncle Skal bsang smiled sweetly and greeted them in a seemingly generous, hospitable way.

After a long discussion, Uncle Skal bsang agreed. They then scheduled the wedding for the fifth day of the sixth lunar month.

The day before the wedding, we prepared fried bread, boiled sheep ribs, fruit, steamed bread, and baked bread piled high on plates lined on the tables at our home. Commercial liquor and homemade barley wine were put on both sides of the plates. Candy, peanuts, and

jujubes were scattered on the table. New wool felt carpets were placed on each side of the tables.

The new bride came at dusk the day before the wedding party and went to my neighbor's home to have her hair arranged. She wore a new lamb-skin robe.

Traditionally, we tied a round silver ornament with pieces of coral in the bride's hair. Mother chose a good-looking, hard-working woman who had living parents and children, and no illness. The woman braided the bride's hair into many braids and, at the end, tied a round silver ornament to her head. She also tied some tufts of sheep wool in her hair.

Brother's parents-in-law and relatives arrived the next day at eleven AM. Neighbors offered three cups of homemade liquor to each of them at our courtyard gate and exchanged pleasantries. One eloquent old man rhythmically recited auspicious words, holding a *kha btags* in his outstretched hands. Sister-in-law's relatives listened attentively. Our neighbors then invited them into our house and offered them what we had. The bride's parents optimistically said, "What a nice banquet!"

Mother and some female neighbors cooked noodles with sliced mutton in a big pot in the *ma Ni* hall. She invited all the villagers to have noodles so that my family would earn respect and lessen the contempt we that were held in. Mother certainly demonstrated that our family situation was still good.

All the villagers gathered in the *ma Ni* hall and had noodles. After a nice lunch, villagers came to my home and we started the entertainment part of the wedding by singing traditional songs. Songs were performed with one singer asking and another answering in song. Later, men made a circle and sang together. While the women sat in the courtyard, the men sat on felt carpets on the porch. A girl sang while hiding in a group of woman. Others could not see her.

After the banquet, the villagers' attitude changed. They treated us nicely. My family regained our good reputation and

eventually got everything back through the power of Sister-in-law's family.

Mother could now rest for a time, but she never stopped missing Father. Brother had learned a lot about businesses and could cope with the difficulties that arose. His confidence increased. He was proud to maintain what Father had entrusted him with. He somehow had a pleasant time with his wife.

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One mid-autumn day, Sister-in-law's father told Mother that Father would come home that night. Mother was somewhat suspicious, but clearly delighted. I could see excitement in her glimmering eyes.

The village children called Sister and me "fatherless." Every time I heard that, it broke my heart. The sudden news of Father's return was like glue, mending my fractured heart. I became energetic as blood surged through every nerve of my body. I was utterly rejuvenated. My confidence swelled to the point that I thought I would explode. I would no longer bear the name "fatherless." How happy I was!

Our hope that Father would return had crashed several times, but we never gave up, steadfastly believing that he would rejoin us. The only way to continue life is to become stronger than before. Mother never showed weakness to others. She always stood as firmly as a memorial stone that never toppled over.

Brother slaughtered a big fat sheep while chanting the Six Sacred Syllables. We prepared a banquet-like meal for Father. Two rapeseed oil lamps were placed on the adobe stove, where they shone brightly as the flames in the adobe stove danced energetically. We silently gazed at each other, expecting Father to soon appear. Our hopeful anticipation made us forget our hunger.

We waited a long time. Father did not come. We worried that he had encountered difficulties on the way home. The light from the oil lamp grew small and dim. Mother added rapeseed oil to the small metal oil-burner and the light brightened. The meat in the wooden plates cooled and the fat congealed.

"Please eat. You must be hungry now," Mother said just as we heard our courtyard gate swing open.

Mother quickly stood and went out in high-spirits. We followed. Mother stood like a zombie on the porch as Father motionlessly stood at the big courtyard gate. He was dressed in a worn-out army uniform and wore leather boots caked with dirt. His beard was long and bushy and his hair was a mess. Sister, Brother, and I ran to him, and embraced him tightly. Tears flowed down Father's face and plopped onto the ground. Meanwhile, Mother took a stick and beat Father's legs. She must have been happy about his return. Her beating was done silently without explanation. She gazed up at the sky and beheld a charming moon that smiled at her softly. Everything was utterly quiet as time seemed to pause.

Mother and Father touched their foreheads but did not embrace. I did not understand why they acted like that. Mother needed a hug and warmth. Their behavior shows how a couple should behave in public. Anyway, I embraced them both.

After this joy tempered with sorrow, Mother led us back inside and we began the happiest dinner ever. Father was like a hungry wolf, eating and drinking.

Mother told him everything that had happened, our family's current circumstance, and all the details of Brother's wedding party. Once Father understood our situation, he made a plan for our family that everybody would admire so that we would no longer suffer from jealousy.

"Rin chen rgyal, you are stronger than before and did very well in my absence. Persistence is the key to success," Father said to Brother patiently.

Sister-in-law gazed at Father in astonishment, thinking Father was an experienced man who educated his children differently than many parents. He did not force us to do something, but talked to us instead.

Father continued, "My dearest daughters, you two are old enough to marry. I have two sworn-brothers. Each has a son. I will betroth you to them."

I didn't know what this meant, nor did Sister, but we quietly nodded agreement. Mother was concerned about our well-being in other homes. Her expression made me sad. She seemed always to be concerned about us.

"You are not required to join the army again, right?" Brother asked.

Father sighed deeply and said, "Well, the war is finished, but I am now considered an enemy on the grounds that we were revolting. They have been looking for us everywhere. I am no longer safe."

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Father made marriage plans for Sister and me. Sister would marry the son of Father's sworn-brother in Ser rgyal Village. I would go to remote Reb sa Village and marry another of Father's sworn-brother's sons. I worried how long I could survive in a place that lacked drinking water.

Late one night, Father planned to escape with his friends. Meanwhile, the local government officials had learned of Father's whereabouts. Unfortunately, that night some local officers saw Father in town, followed him home, arrested him in bed, and put him in handcuffs. Mother screamed at the officers when they were violently taking Father to the county town prison. Mother and we three children could only cry and watch Father as he was tortured by those heartless officers. As Brother moved to protect Father, an officer hit his head with a black metal stick. He fell to the ground. Mother fainted. Sister and I held Mother and screamed loudly. Sister-in-law held Brother and wailed. Meanwhile, our family watch-dog barked furiously at the unfamiliar men who were unafraid.

"Remember what I told you. Keep your own lives. Persistence is the only key to success," Father said sadly, and soon vanished into the distance.

I hated the misery I felt and the life I was immersed. I considered suicide, but then Father's words swirled in my mind and I resolved to live and not disappoint Father. I calmed myself.

Mother's heart was broken and her personality changed after Father's arrest.

I have never forgotten that frightening night when Father was arrested. He never came back. We never knew what happened to him. The local government provided no information. Brother put a lot of effort in learning about Father, but he learned nothing.

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Spring stretched out its wings as it came to this unfair world, which contains hardship, unhappiness, and complexity. Spring blew to the grassland. The grass became green, the streams became clean, hibernating animals awakened, the air became fresh, and alert birds got busy building nests. Meanwhile, people were busy working in big fields.

I struggled as I quickly became a young woman. I was fifteen years old. How was it possible for me to go to such a place as my designated husband's home? I was confused about how to face a new life with such obvious challenges.

Mother and Brother decided not to hold a wedding party for my marriage. I understood my family's circumstances. I thought if I relied on Mother, I would never become an adult and be able to achieve anything meaningful for my family. I knew I would be a burden for Brother if I stayed at home. I thus decided to go to Reb sa Village as a bride.

"Not everything is decided by people. Reality dictates life's direction," Brother said. He bought me many colorful Tibetan decorations and some clothes. Mother gave me her coral necklace.

Mother saw me off outside of our home with tears shimmering in her eyes. I could imagine how much she suffered because of my departure. I held back my tears and gave her a beatific smile. I did not want to marry a man in another place, but I could not break my determination to keep my promise to Father.

Brother and some relatives escorted me to Reb sa Village, which was located on a mountaintop, six hours on horseback from my home. The process of going to Reb sa frightened me. The path was washed away in places and loose gravel shrouded much of the track that zigzagged up and along steep mountains. My imperfect horsemanship frightened me even more. Brother put a soft leather saddle on my horse's back so I would suffer less on the way.

We descended sloping hills to Smad ba, passing a village near a riverbank where there were many trees. We rested for some minutes as our horses enjoyed the dense grass under the trees. We then crossed Rong bo Nine River, which was small enough to cross easily. Our horses were accustomed to crossing rivers.

An hour later, we reached the foot of a mountain. I saw a narrow, zigzag path snaking up to the mountaintop. I had no clue how we would ascend the mountain. My strong determination had helped me set off and sustained me. It took four hours. I felt very uneasy along that rough path.

Everything has a beginning and an end and when we neared the village, I vaguely noticed a group of people waiting for us with *ka btags* and liquor. They seemed very kindly. Father had told me that the environment forms people's behavior so I supposed that savages resembling wild beasts must live in such a place. I was afraid. I was also curious to know what my husband looked like. We had never met.

They welcomed us with great respect and we exchanged pleasantries. Some pretty women in robes came, stood on both sides of me, and held my arms. I was in my lamb-skin robe with some heavy silver ornaments and I had covered my face with a red scarf. I could not walk steadily to my husband's home, so they helped me.

At the gate of the home, a woman held a copper kettle containing water mixed with powder brought from the local monastery. She poured a little in the palm of my right hand. I was expected to drink it. I then stepped with my right foot first across a smoldering sacrifice that smelled of juniper. This expelled evil from outsiders.

We then entered an old house that seemed ready to collapse. The main room had plenty of space for baggage and could seat nearly twenty people. Blackened walls covered with soot made the room seem even older. Next to the main room was an enclosure that reeked of sheep dung. I concluded the family was not poor. They had hundreds of sheep.

We sat in the room as they offered boiled mutton and beef. There was no food different from that in my home. We enjoyed a pleasant meal.

A man in a lamb-skin robe entered the room. The woman next to me said that he was my husband. He was slender and not tall. He had long hair and fair skin, which I thought was special, because many people's faces were dark and even black. His appearance satisfied everyone. I concluded he might not be the wild animal I had imagined. I did not know what his personality might be, nor what he thought about me. He welcomed Brother and my relatives. In turn, his relatives tied long red sashes around his waist. I did not know what it meant, but it seemed an auspicious custom.

Early the next morning, Brother and my relatives went back home.

I had much that I wanted to tell Mother, but I swallowed my words. I missed Father, cursed the officials that had taken him away, and hoped for the day he would be released.

I felt so lonely. Everything was new to me, but all my husband's family members were kind to me. I now had plenty of work to do, such as collecting yak dung and plants for fuel, herding sheep, and fetching water. My destiny changed and I was no longer a girl, but I still had no right to discuss family matters. How miserable that I had been reincarnated as a girl! What I could do was not talk and work harder.

Homesickness and hard work broke my desire for a happy life, but it was my obligation to work for my new family. I did not know what would happen next. When I became a member of that family, I

needed to support them. I tried my best to help my family have a peaceful, secure life.

Two years later, I delivered my first son, delighting my entire family. It also meant that my family members now treated me like a queen. I would have been scolded had I given birth to a girl.

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The sun was alone in the boundless blue sky at noon one day. No vultures, no birds flew under the hot sun. They were in their nests with their hatchlings, avoiding the heat. I took this chance to sun my husband's sheep-skin robe in our courtyard. The heat quickly made the lice flee from the wool. I held the collar and shook the robe several times. Lice fell out and struggled on the ground. Their futile wiggles made me tremble. I quickly picked up a brush, swept the lice together into a container, and threw them into a deep hole. I continued to find lice hiding in the wool and popped them between my thumbnails. Seeing the blood on my nails, I murmured, "My husband's blood! You cruel vampires are really heartless!" It was difficult to delouse the sheep-skin. I spent the whole afternoon doing it.

At dusk, my husband returned from the county town where he had purchased wheat flour and other necessities. Exhausted, he lay near the hearth and wiped perspiration from his face. I felt sympathetic, because he had been walking all day. I poured cool water in a bowl with a cooper scoop from a clay vat and handed it to him. He downed it in a single gulp, then untied his red sash, took off his robe, and showed me what he had bought and brought home in a wool bag. He was usually happy when he came from town, but he was not happy that night. I teased, "Who pulled your face down?"

"People in the county town are talking about government policies. Leaders will come confiscate our property and put all the fields together. All the villagers will have to work together. They want to reform the economic system and create a new system called commune production. Our way of life will soon change," he responded.

"Why are they doing this?" I inquired.

"People say they need money. They want to collect the money we make from hard work. They want to change our way of life," he replied.

I did not comprehend such complexities, but I was sure something bad would soon happen. Local people called such policies "Disaster." "Can this disaster destroy our life?" I asked.

"Nobody can predict what will come, but I'm sure starvation will befall us," he replied despondently.

"You are not the Buddha. Don't make a fuss," I said, stopping him from saying more and then I started cooking dinner.

That year, outsiders came to our community and built red brick rooms. Local officers confiscated our land and property and built a dining hall that provided workers two meals a day. Our work was very hard.

They also set up a nursery because little children would distract a mother from her work. Mothers should nurse and care for them. Enhancing work efficiency was the intention. Villagers had no right to refuse to send their children to the nursery.

One early morning, the local officers took all three-year-old children in our village, including my older son. I beseeched The Three Jewels, but got no help. I cursed the heartless officers and scolded the Buddha.

Parents who refused to comply had their children taken to the nursery. The officers used an electric prod on such people. We had never seen such a device before and were afraid to go near it.

The officers hired babysitters who had a good relationship with the local government and township officials. Children suffered in the nursery from poor food and dirty water. Some got sick and died. Parents were not allowed to see their children without local officials' permission. We did not know when we could see our children.

My husband and I fell into unbearable despair. Luckily, one of the babysitters was my neighbor. Her husband was influential,

thus she was able to become a babysitter. She told me, "Your son had diarrhea from eating spoiled leftovers. I secretly gave him medicine and he is now in high spirits all day. Don't worry about him. I'm taking good care of him."

I gratefully prostrated to her for saving my son's life. She also gave me a bag of *rtsam pa* and a little butter. That bag of *rtsam pa* saved my family. My husband got sick and my daily earnings alone could not feed all our family members. Her *rtsam pa* and butter were sufficient until my husband recovered. While delousing his sheep-skin robe, the many healthy lice shocked me. My husband was still weak and I worried that he would be unable to withstand what would occur next. I had just gotten a bag of poison made by a company in Shanghai to exterminate lice, which lessened my work, but the poison also had a very strong odor that decreased appetite and caused headaches.

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Waking up in the morning, my attention immediately focused on the summit of magnificent Zhwa lung Mountain that resembled a warm wish, consoling me with the promise that my son would soon return to my arms. This expectation sustained and encouraged us to persevere and not abandon hope. There was a reason to live if I had a happy family and a lovely son.

One morning, I sacrificed *bsang* on the altar in our home while praying to Buddha to bring good fortune. That was all I could do for my son.

Everyone in the village cried for food and mumbled, "I'm hungry," as malnutrition and a severe lack of food took its toll. Children often went to a narrow valley near our village and drank salty water that made their lips dry and coated with white powder.

I was both happy and frightened, as my next story will show you: I was working in the commune production area. I was menstruating. I was very uncomfortable and needed to change my cloth to control the blood flow. There were many workers there. I told my situation to the officer in charge and asked for some free time to

change the cloth. Fortunately, he let me go somewhere where others would not see me.

When I finished changing the cloth and was ready to return, I saw a hawk catch a marmot right in front of me. The hawk held the marmot in its talons and bit the marmot's neck. The marmot struggled as the hawk killed it. I thought that the marmot and I had the same destiny. How pitiful we were! While in such despair, the hawk suddenly tossed the marmot away and flew westward. I did not know why the hawk discarded the marmot. I guessed it was the marmot's bad smell.

I optimistically remembered the exact location and happily returned to the work site.

At midnight under the bright moonlight, my husband and I donned our sheep-skin robes. They reflected less light and we hoped nobody would discover us. We set out for the dead marmot and soon found it. We went to a place with salty water. My husband skinned the marmot, cut it into pieces, and washed the pieces with salty water. This prevented the meat from spoiling. We buried the skin in a hole and took the meat home.

Nobody discovered us. My husband tied a string between pillars in a warehouse and hung the meat on the string. Even though I had not eaten any of the marmot meat, I felt full.

That marmot meat helped feed our family for a month. We had a little rice and wheat flour we had received in exchange for work points my husband and I earned from our work. Sometimes, we made soup with the marmot meat, porridge with wheat flour, and rice soup. Some families baked bread, which was too much for us, because it required a lot of wheat flour. Our biggest worry was that officers would discover our marmot meat. It was illegal to have food without their permission. Luckily, vigilance kept us safe.

People cried for food and had no energy to work. The local government was like a hibernating animal in a winter cave. The situation was like a hard-to-guess riddle. Policies were like summer weather that changed every moment.

One morning, my husband and I heard a magpie's melodious chirping, signaling we would receive good news. Moreover, I had dreamed of a man giving me an apple. I anticipated a miracle - that my son would appear before me. My husband guessed something from my expression and said, "Your hopes have brought good luck to us many times. It will be the same this time."

I knew he just wanted to make me feel better but still, I was encouraged.

"Life is full of complications and people ignore the causality that Buddhism teaches. We chant scriptures every day for all sentient beings to be free from hardship and suffering, but there are many monsters among Tibetans who will engage in horrible behavior if it brings advantages and their family members won't be hungry. I'm very afraid of the possibility that those monsters will kill us for a meal. Our fate is preordained and nobody can change it. It is better to accept reality. We will suffer in the coming year. Time will never be the same as before," I replied like a sage who had boundless experience and a deep understanding of life.

My husband made a face and said nothing, hinting that it was best for a woman to be quiet and not talk like a man. I knew I was lower than any male, but I wanted to express my feelings and expectations to my relatives and others. I had hatred, passions, and ideas just like men. Anyway, I could not do it, otherwise it would bring arguments and beatings, even though my husband was not cruel. For these reasons, I was like a mute most of the time.

At dusk, our village head came to our home and said, "There is a meeting in our township tomorrow morning. Your husband has been chosen to be a representative. Our village has five representatives. Don't let him be late or they will punish him."

"What meeting? Is there something to distribute to our village or is it collecting taxes?" I asked.

The village head whistled and pressed his right index finger to his lips in response.

At that moment, my husband was hiding the dry marmot meat in the warehouse. If the village head had learned that we had hid meat, we would be punished like criminals. I was suspicious of my husband being a representative. He had neither special skills nor abilities. I was frightened that he would fall into a suffering abyss and never return.

The next morning, my husband went to the township town. Nobody knew what the meeting was about. Three years had passed and I had not even seen so much as my son's shadow. I missed him day and night. I hoped that the meeting was about the release of our children.

In the afternoon, I prostrated in front of the family shrine where there were no Buddha images or scripture volumes. I just put a *bla ma*'s picture there. Suddenly, I heard the door creak open and two figures appeared. I was speechless. It was my husband and son! Tears streamed down my face when my son hid behind my husband. Wordlessly, I stretched out my right hand, but he was shy. He did not recognize me, his mother. He was emaciated. His appearance had changed. He had become taller. He wore a tattered shirt and short trousers. He was now six.

"I'm your mother. Come here. I want to look at you," I said.

"My mother is over there in the nursery. I don't know you. I've never seen you before," he replied.

"I'm your real mother. I gave birth to you," I said.

When I went to hug him, he was afraid. Not only did he not recognize me, he was afraid of me. My brain almost exploded. My son's behavior broke my heart. I fell into depression.

I spent a lot of time telling my son the whole story of what had happened to him. He was reluctant to stay with us. He could not accept that we were his real parents. He had no empathy for me. Exhausted from trying to win him over, mental and physical suffering made me almost collapse.

My husband was unskilled at communicating with others and was usually quiet. Sometimes he said to our son, "Dear, please give

this to me, your father needs it." He never tried to force him. My son just gave it to him and was never disobedient.

Our strategies were completely different. I thought mine was best, but my son always slept with my husband. This confused me. However, I hoped that one day he would call me "Mother."

A gust loudly whooshed through trees when I was in bed one night. The sound made me recall a story Father had told me. When I was a little girl, I had wondered where the wind came from. When I asked Father, he told me this story:

Thousands of years ago, there was a splendid invisible place, where a deity lived peacefully with his followers. He divined that people on earth would fight each other for territory, power, and property. He thus created cold wind, tornadoes, and hail. He put each of them into a different bag. When people are dishonest and greedy, he punishes them by what he created. He opens the hail bag to destroy crops, buildings, and fields to make people feel the suffering of starvation and homelessness. When they are loyal and sincere, he closes the bag. The earth is square. When a tornado comes, it catches people and takes them to the edge of the square, where they tumble into a place they will never be rescued from.

I gradually began dreaming:

A monster chased me in a valley where I had gone to collect yak dung. Gathering my courage, I ran away. I was exhausted after crossing several creeks. The creature almost caught my right leg. I was terrified and ready to abandon hope, but then I heard a familiar sound in the distance. I listened carefully and then I realized it was my son. He called me "Mother" several times. I continued to run and then I fell. With a screech, I woke up and saw my son beside me. I thanked Buddha for saving me from the nightmare.

"I'm sorry I did not acknowledge that you are my mother," he said, kneeling on the ground to express his regret.

"How can I grumble that you are unwilling to accept me as your mother? It's not your fault. Those monsters separated us for three years," I replied.

When I tried to embrace him, he vanished. I guessed that a ghost had taken him away, otherwise it was impossible that he was gone. I sobbed while calling his name. Nothing happened. I felt great pain, like an awl was stabbing my heart. Wanting to commit suicide, I banged my head against the wall.

I awakened. Tears dampened my pillow. My husband was snoring and my son was asleep in his arms.

"Such a horrible dream," I thought, and went back to sleep.

Nothing had changed when I woke up again. My son stared quietly at me as before.

Later when I told the dream to my husband, he laughed and said, "Dream in a dream. What an interesting dream!"

After breakfast, my son went outside. Some children his age were playing chess, which most boys liked. He overheard the children talking about how some children who had been released from the nursery did not accept their real parents, and then behaved very badly toward their parents.

At night when I returned from work, he was sitting in the living room motionlessly.

"I will cook delicious noodles for you tonight," I said.

"Mother, where is Father?" he asked.

I did not respond. Tears painted my face. I was uncertain. Was it a dream? I pinched myself hard. The resultant pain assured me that I was in the real world. I rushed to him and embraced him tightly. My small world was suddenly full of blossoming flowers.

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Two years passed. Change came again. The local township officials gathered all the locals in Ri gong ma Village near the township town. We were ordered to empty our houses for strangers who would soon arrive. Our village head said, "Many outsiders from Hunan Province

will come to our place. Hunan is somewhere none of us have ever been. They lack food and many have endured terrible starvation. They are coming here to lessen their local government's heavy burden. Please gather what you need. Nobody can predict when we can return to our homes."

We loaded some of our belongings on saddled mules and moved to Ri gong ma Village, where our village head arranged a room for each family. A house had seven or eight small rooms. The wooden houses there with adobe walls were very attractive, and impressed us. We seldom saw such clean, new buildings. My family had a room in a big house located in the center. There were seven families in that house - a total of fifty people. It was like a nest of ants with people constantly coming and going.

The next day, an official said, "We have changed the food rations and work schedule. You will receive food every day and no longer need to worry about being hungry. In addition, please put up with the outsiders and don't trouble them. If you make trouble, I will punish you."

I could earn three food tickets a day. A ticket could be exchanged for three pieces of bread in the canteen that the local government had built. People's faces changed a little by having such good bread. Unfortunately, the official ordered the cook to grind wheat stalk into powder, mix it into wheat flour, and bake the bread. The bread tasted good to me, even though the recipe was unacceptable. However, some children were too young to adapt to such food and died from constipation.

My husband and I earned an extra twenty-eight food tickets, which we could use in the county town to buy shoes, clothes, wheat flour, rice, salt, candy, jujubes, barley wine, tea bricks, pepper, and so on.

As winter approached, my husband went to the county town to buy boots for Father-in-law, Mother-in-law, himself, my son, and me; a small bag of wheat flour; a plastic bag of candy; salt; and a tea brick. We knew we would enjoy the winter. We were content.

Two years later, the outsiders returned to their homeland. A high-positioned leader probably legislated a new policy. We then returned to our own homes.

The outsiders had damaged our two rooms. They had collected wood and burned them for fuel. I was furious by such destruction from such heartless people. My husband said, "Don't be angry. You would have probably done the same if you had been in their situation."

My husband repaired the rooms and I cleaned. After we finished, I went to collect yak dung near our village, where I stumbled on several rotting, stinking corpses. Innumerable insects struggled in their bodies. Villagers soon surrounded and gazed at the corpses, covering their mouths and noses with their hands.

Several days later, this horrible odor continued to waft. Vultures were too disgusted to eat the corpses. Our village head then took some men to bury them and chant sutras.

We were busy making a new living and readying ourselves for the next challenges.

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I had another dangerous experience. I will tell you about it now. Oh, I need to go to our *ma Ni* hall, chant scriptures and turn the prayer wheel with my other friends! Life is good now and I don't worry about anything. My only job is to chant scriptures as many times as possible and turn the prayer wheel often. The more times I do this, the better reincarnation I will have.

I have three sons and three daughters. They are very successful and they have made their own lives. My oldest son attended school and now teaches Tibetan and math to local students. He gets a good salary from the government. I live with him. Others married kind, admirable spouses. I have many grandchildren. My dear husband passed away years ago from a liver disease and was reincarnated as a boy in my village.

Life gave me many challenges, but I overcame them all.

Some people ask, "How would you summarize your life?"

I reply, "If you have the courage to hope, no matter how small, happiness will follow you everywhere."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a mdo	ଆମଦ୍ବୁଦ୍ଧି
bla brang	ବ୍ଲାବ୍ରଙ୍ଗ
bsang	ବସଂ
gdugs dkar chen mo	ଗ୍ରୁଗ୍ ଦ୍କାର ଚେନ ମୋ
gser chen	ଗ୍ସେର ଚେନ
gter	ଗ୍ରେତ୍
gter kha	ଗ୍ରେତ୍ କା
hor nag	ହୋର ନାଗ
Huangnaihe	ହୁଅଙ୍ଗନାଇହେ
Huangnan	ହୁଅଙ୍ଗନା
kha btags	କା ବ୍ତାଗ୍ସ
lha sa	ଲ୍ହା ସା
ma Ni khang	ମା ନି ଖାଙ୍ଗ
mgar stong btsan	ମଗା ସ୍ଟଙ୍ଗ ବ୍ତସାନ
mtsho sngon	ମତ୍ଶୋ ସଙ୍ଗୋ
mtsho sngon po	ମତ୍ଶୋ ସଙ୍ଗୋ ପୋ
mtsho sngon khri shor rgyal mo	ମତ୍ଶୋ ସଙ୍ଗୋ ଖ୍ରି ଶୋର ର୍ଗ୍ୟାଲ ମୋ
mtsho snying	ମତ୍ଶୋ ସନ୍ଯିଙ୍ଗ
phyi skor	ଫ୍ରୀଜ୍ମାର୍
Qinghai	କିଙ୍ଗହୈ
reb gong	ରେବ ଗଂଙ୍ଗ
reb sa	ରେବ ସା
ri gong ma	ରି ଗଂଙ୍ଗ ମା
rin chen rgyal	ରିଣ୍ ଚେନ ର୍ଗ୍ୟାଲ
rlung rta	ରୁଙ୍ଗ ର୍ତା
rma lho	ରମା ଲ୍ହୋ
rtsam pa	ର୍ତ୍ସାମ ପା
sangs rgyas mtsho	ସଙ୍ଗ୍ ର୍ଗ୍ୟାସ ମତ୍ଶୋ

ser rgyal སେର རྒྱା

skal bzang གླྙྡ བྚଙྔ

smad pa མླା དପ

srong btsan sgam po ཞྭ དତ୍ତ མླା དପ

thun rin ཐ དନ དିନ

Tongren 同仁

tshe b+ha ཕྲ དହ

zhwa lung ཤྲ རୁ དଙྔ

A NIGHT DATE

Phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཕོན་ཚོགས་དབང་rgyal

I was born in 1993 in Ska chung Village, Nyin mtha' Township, Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Reb gong (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China.

Night dating was popular for teenage boys some years ago. My brother (1984) and my cousin (b. 1988) rode horses and yaks when they went night dating. They generally rode yaks, because horses were important for their families and used for such important tasks as pursuing bandits and going to the county town for grain and supplies.

I was eager to join my brother and cousin, but my parents didn't give permission. They thought I was too young to protect myself from dog attacks. I felt hopeless staying at home, listening to Grandmother's (b. 1939) folktales.

When I was around eighteen, my parents finally gave permission. Father (b. 1954) told me to be careful of dogs.

The local boys generally gathered at the same place each day and discussed which local girls slept alone at night and if they had night companions. I asked another cousin (b. 1994), "Tonight, would you like to go with me on a night date? I heard from the other boys that the two girls in a neighbor family are sleeping alone in a white tent pitched near their family's big black yak-hair tent. Their parents will not bother us if we are quiet."

Cousin excitedly replied, "How about the dogs if we do go there?"

"Several night daters will go with us," I said.

That night after supper and after chanting night scripture with my family members, Father told us all to go to bed early and get

up early the next morning. He added, "You boys don't make me have to wake you."

I felt a little guilty, because I had an appointment that night with Cousin, whom I soon met outside. We went to my small white tent near the sheep pen. Father had told me to watch the sheep at night to protect them from wolf attack.

Cousin said, "What should we do about the sheep tonight? If wolves attack the sheep while we're gone, it will be a serious problem."

I tied my family's dog near the sheep pen. Father had told me the dog was a good protector of sheep at night. We next wrapped ourselves in our robes, grasped our dog beaters, turned on a flashlight, and walked to our neighbor's home, which was about two kilometers away.

When we arrived, no local boys were there, although I imagined others would come soon.

We carefully and quietly entered the white tent. I gripped my dog beater in my right hand and the flashlight in my left hand, ready to beat any dogs if they attacked.

The two girls were in separate beds in the tent. I lay by one girl and Cousin lay by the other. I began whispering, "Hey! Can you scoot over a bit and make a place for me?"

"No! No! No! Go away. Don't touch me. I don't know who you are," she murmured.

"Don't pretend! We live in the same community. You don't know who I am? How interesting! Tonight, I'm here only for you. I hope and believe you won't disappoint me, right?" I endlessly persuaded.

Finally, she quieted and said no more about rejecting me. Understanding that she had agreed, I took off my clothes and moved under her warm robe cover. I softly touched her body and noticed that Cousin had succeeded with the other girl.

Some other boys soon arrived, but when they saw we were with the girls, they left hopelessly.

I stayed under her robe and we talked about this and that until midnight. Then we grew silent.

The next morning, I woke up before daybreak and roused Cousin. We then said farewell to our one-night girlfriends, and returned home.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Henan 河南

Huangnan 黃南

mtsho sngon མཚོ ཟང

nyin mtha' ཉິນ ມຫາ

phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཞຸນ ທ්ංචො དඹං ຮජය

Qinghai 青海

reb gong ໃບ ສົມ

rma lho ສຸກ

ska chung ສັກ ດົງ

HERDING, ROMANCE, AND A LETTER

Lcags so lhun 'grub རྒྱାଗྲྷ བྼྲྷ གླྷ དྲྷ ཉྷ ཁྱྷ ཁྱྷ ཁྱྷ ཁྱྷ (Klu sgrub ལྷ ངྷ ངྷ)

One summer when I was about thirteen years old, Brother-in-law and I were herding sheep. When summer comes, all the local families move to the summer pasture and live in black yak-hair tents. The summer pasture is enormous. Some mountains resemble gigantic pillars holding up the sky.

Rdza rgan Mountain is important to us. We often herd sheep on that mountain in summer.

One day, Brother-in-law and I drove our flock of about 1,000 sheep to the mountain. At the same time, other families also drove their flocks of sheep and yak herds. The livestock seemed as countless as stars in the sky. As we all herded our animals toward the mountain it began raining as though the sky had been ripped open. We all held umbrellas while following our livestock. Brother in-law held a black one that we both sheltered under.

At about ten AM, I drove the sheep to the right side of the mountain, near the *lab tse*. Thick fog covered the mountains and the muddy tracks were full of water. As I walked along, sloshing sounds and the sensation of squishing mud were my constant companions. Nevertheless, I was feeling fine.

I was just a child and sometimes Brother-in-law shouted at me to walk faster to mind the sheep. He wore a brown hat, which he pulled down to shield his face when he lit a cigarette. The smoke from his cigarette slowly wandered into the sky in tiny clouds. He often blew smoke rings and sent twin plumes of smoke out through his nostrils.

We drove the sheep to the foot of the mountains, and then walked in front of them with Brother-in-law shouting to frighten wolves that were surely lurking hungrily inside the thick fog.

Meanwhile, he sang love songs to any young women who might be in earshot.

He entertained me by telling me about his romantic adventures before his marriage:

I had a relationship with a Muslim girl who worked in a restaurant in our township town. My parents really loved me and, to make me happy, they let me often go to the township center where I typically ate in restaurants where, at one, I met this Muslim girl. She had big eyes as bright as stars and was tall and slender. Although not a beauty, her gentle character and the joy she took in life made her very attractive. She had worked in that restaurant for a few years and could speak some Tibetan. We had many conversations when I was in the township town. One time, with a hopeful smile, I asked her how she felt about me. After we became more intimate, love echoed in our hearts and our relationship became like a blend of water and milk. We met every night in a single room near the restaurant.

We understood that our relationship would not be permanent because of our different backgrounds. This realization grew more painful, day by day. Finally, we said goodbye to each other tearfully, and then she left and returned to her home in Ka cu.

We reached the mountaintop without being conscious of the time. Interesting, intimate conversation minimizes time. The thick fog surrounded us so we couldn't see some of our sheep. Sometimes, Brother-in-law shouted to the sheep. He said, "We once drove the sheep over the mountain behind our place. It is a place with lush grass that belongs to the Kan lho government. The government has no livestock, because there is no one to care for that place. We often fearfully herd sheep there where the grass is plentiful. When we drive the livestock to that place, some of us scout ahead. If it is safe, we take our livestock over the mountain."

This time was just like that. Brother-in-law told me to stay on the left side of the sheep and be ready to flee if strangers came.

"Today is especially dangerous. We can't see much because of the fog. We must be extra careful," he cautioned.

Other herd-mates' sheep rushed past us. I relaxed and napped. I dreamed that a man came and took some of our sheep. This so frightened me, that I woke up abruptly, just as Brother-in-law shouted for me to come so we could eat together. I ran to him. When our sheep reached the bottom of the valley, we ate.

Brother-in-law reported, "Everything is fine. We no longer need to worry about the masters of the grassland. They will never come after lunchtime."

We sheltered behind a small hill, away from a cold wind. It rained and rained. Thick fog reached the middle of the mountain. It was like being in an airplane. He soon snored like an angry yak. I no longer felt sleepy. I was bored. I took a blade of grass and pricked his face like a mosquito. I laughed secretly as he swatted at this vexation.

Meanwhile, some herd-mates had vanished into the distance. I was anxious to go home, sit near the fire, and warm up. I woke Brother-in-law, who told me to drive the sheep on the right side. He went below me and drove the sheep up the mountain.

Suddenly, two men riding horses appeared. Brother-in-law shouted for me to quickly drive the sheep back to our territory. I knew something was wrong. I fearfully ran after the sheep as fast as I could. The two men were getting closer. One man in his twenties had long curly hair that he silently shook from side to side. The other man was around forty. The younger man held a rifle. The older man shouted for us to stop.

We ignored him until he shot into the sheep five or six times.

One of our sheep rolled down the mountain. I was exhausted and I thought my heart would stop beating. Anyway, Brother-in-law and I were fast and escaped, although we lost that one sheep.

Eventually, the two men loaded the dead sheep on one horse, rode into the distance, and vanished into the thick fog. We headed for home, both happy and sad. We had escaped, but had lost a sheep. We were certain Father would scold us.

•••

The next year when I was about fourteen, we were in our summer camp in the mountains. Long, thick fog embraced the middle of the towering mountains, hiding the green grass. It was dawn. Every bird was awake and chirping. I got up and was soon ready to drive the yaks to our tent. It was time to milk the female yaks and the fog lifted, revealing countless livestock. Thousands of flowers gracefully showed off.

After I had rounded up the yaks and taken them back near where my family's tent was located, some fellow herders had already made a fire behind a tent to make an offering to mountain deities. The sound of the men and boys chanting resembled the buzzing of bees.

Meanwhile, the girls and women were milking the yaks into wooden pails.

Inside the tent, I added fuel to the fire to get ready for breakfast. During the half-hour my family had breakfast together, Father told me to drive the sheep into such-and-such pasture because he had to go to town to buy some things. He added, "It will be hard for you to tend the flock. This is your first day to be responsible for our entire flock all by yourself. Be careful of wolves and thunder when you are on top of the mountains."

I grabbed an umbrella and drove our flock of sheep to the mountains in the distance. Some other young men were also driving their own flocks of sheep. As Sko b+hes drove a flock toward me I realized he wanted to herd together with me. He had told me a few days earlier about falling in love with a pretty girl and had expressed the hope that I would write a letter to her on his behalf. So up we went together. Other flocks were also climbing up the side of the mountains.

When my flock reached the mountain top, the sheep scattered across the landscape and I thought, "My home place is the most beautiful place in the whole world."

At midday, Sko b+hes came over. I was eager to talk with him. He asked how the herding was going, sat by me, put out some food, and exclaimed, "Eat! I brought some good food today because I knew you would be here." Then he took off his bright robe and acted as though he was exhausted. "What good weather today!" he enthused. "I now have a chance to finish my love story. Then we need to discuss writing a letter to her immediately."

After eating a little he asked, "Do you remember Klu mo?"

"Yes! You told me about her earlier," I replied.

He sighed then told me this story:

Oh, right! Last summer I fell in love with her. You surely know that. From the day after I fell in love with her, I visited her every night after dinner. I told her my feelings. The first night when I met her, she shouted at me to go away, and said, "You are so troublesome. Why did you come here?"

I didn't give up and visited her for more than ten nights in a row, telling her that I wanted to love her. By then, she was talking more to me.

Two months later she was living alone in her family's winter house. I knew no one would bother us there so I got on my motorcycle and drove near her home. Dismounting, I stealthily crept to the side of her house. It was about ten-thirty in the evening. Eventually, I tiptoed inside over to her bed. I woke her up and told her very gently about my suffering and lonely life, and how I was scared she would reject me. I thought it was my last chance to tell her of my real love. It was my final hope.

She didn't believe me. I had no more words in my brain, or maybe those words have not been invented yet. I turned on my flashlight, took my knife, and plunged it deep into my left hand. She cried and held my hand.

"This colorful blood shows my real love for you. It is my last hope," I protested.

She said, "I totally accept you."

I wiped away her tears and comforted her.

She continued, "Before, I didn't believe you, because I have heard many sweet speeches. Most are just sugary words. I didn't care about you but, after you stabbed yourself, I trust you completely. You said you loved me a month ago, but I didn't believe that. I'm sorry, Sko b+hes. Tomorrow I will belong to you. I love you and will wait for you always. I have no other man. Only you are in my mind."

She said all this tearfully and hugged me tightly. When I first embraced her, I wondered if it was a dream. She had been constantly in my mind for a long time. I hugged her again and kissed her. Then we slept together and talked a lot about our feelings.

Time passed as quickly as a splendid horse gallops across the grassland. Our bed was warmer than before and, though I didn't want to leave her, I had to. We hugged and kissed again, and then I left.

At daybreak, many birds had awakened and were flying near me as I rode the motorcycle back to my home. My feeling was as nice as the sky was wide.

Sadly, her family and mine are at odds. I am an only son and she is an only child. Both our families refuse to accept our relationship. Her father hates me and beats me whenever he finds me with her. He has told me to never visit her again, but our love is as deep as the ocean. It's impossible to destroy true love.

I'm at a loss as to how we might be together. Her parents really love her, and are very protective. I miss her so much. Sometimes I can't sleep at night, because I am thinking about our relationship. I think constantly about how to pass the time if I can't see her.

On the twelfth day of the first lunar month, I got a chance to meet her for the first time in three months. Her parents had gone to a prayer festival at Reb gong Monastery. I went to see her at night. When I reached her home, she was waiting for me and said not one word. She embraced me tearfully. I stayed with her for four days.

The last day we were suffering, but we were also happy. As I left she said, "Don't fret about me. I'll wait for you tomorrow. I'll talk to my parents again. If they won't accept you, I don't want to continue to live in this world." Her eyes were full of tears.

As I drove home on my motorcycle, I was a little afraid of my parents, because I had not been home for several days. However, my parents said nothing, because I am their only son. When I make mistakes, no one scolds me.

A day later she phoned me and said, "I talked to my parents and they don't agree that we can be together. Our only choice is to run away."

We agreed on a place and time to meet and then go far away. Three days later at dusk, after chanting in my family's shrine room I set out to meet her on my motorcycle. I told no one where I was going. We met as agreed. It was about nine at night when we started out for Bla brang County. We rested on the way in a large grassland near Bsang khog. She leaned against my shoulder and said, "I have forsaken my family members for our love. It's unforgivable. I choose you for my whole life. I love you."

My feeling was the same, "I understand. For you, I am also leaving everything. I willingly give up everything for you my dear!" I replied.

We started off again and headed toward Bsang khog Town, which we reached that evening. We bought new clothes in a shop by the street and checked into a hotel. Afterwards, we went out again and had a good dinner.

Two days later in the early morning, we started out for Mgo log, which we reached about three hours later. I found a job for us, because we didn't have enough money to live in that strange place. The job was herding thousands of sheep and hundreds of yaks for a rich family. We lived in a single-room building near the family. We worked hard for them and we were both very busy every day.

Some days later I heard my family members were searching for us. We stayed for another month. I phoned my uncle and asked him to decide our wedding date. Our relatives said that we could be together if we returned soon.

Trusting our families, we left Mgo log, but they tricked us. When we got back to our home place, Klu mo's father beat her and was preparing to beat me. It has been very hard for us to meet since that time.

I think this should finish. I want to do something about her father. Please write a letter to Klu mo about my feelings. We don't have enough time for you to write it today. Please finish by tomorrow. I'll meet you here again.

I said, "I will try my best to write a good letter my dear friend."

At six that evening we prepared to drive our flocks home.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bsang khog བସଙ୍ ຂୋ

ka cu ກାକୁ

kan lho ກାନ୍ ລୋ

klu mo ກୁଲୁ ມୋ

klu sgrub ກୁଲୁ සୁରୁ

lab tse ລାବ ତେ

lcags so lhun 'grub ལ୍ଚାଗ୍ ༈ རୁଣ୍ ཁୁରୁ

lhu b+ha རୁହ ཁା

mgo log ມୋ ລୋ

rdza rgan ຮ୍ଦା ຮଙ୍ଗ

sko b+hes ສ୍କୋ ບେ

STOLEN HORSES

Lcags so lhun 'grub བྱାଣର୍ଷାଙ୍କର୍ମ୍ଭାବ
(Klu sgrub བྱାଣମ)

Our head teacher concluded class, assigned homework for the holiday, and then counted the students diligently. As soon as we were dismissed we ran to the school gate, like a flood rushes to the valley. I was the fastest among the students. At the gate, I turned and waited for the next student. I counted who was second, third, and so on. In fact, I could only count from one to twenty when I was nine so I quickly lost interest.

It was around six PM on a summer day in 2003 when I headed home on foot alone. We live in a tent in summer and my home was about four hours away on the grassland in Gad dmar.

By the time the sun half-hid behind a mountain, I was still walking, passing valley after valley. No one else was in sight. The land was as empty as a boundless ocean. Imagining that there might be some wild animals waiting to attack me, I recalled Mother's saying, "When you are going somewhere, don't forget to chant scriptures."

I began chanting as loudly as possible. I saw no wildlife.

I reached the winter pasture at nine PM.

The sky was wrapped in darkness. I was terribly afraid of storms when I was a child. I wanted to stay in our winter house, but it was vacant in summer. I lacked courage. I then started for the summer pasture.

Darkness surrounded me.

I heard water flowing in streams. It seemed like another dark world dominated by birds making strange sounds. Later, I learned that these birds make that sound every night at the same time. Thousands of birds don't like the night, and sleep, but that bird is different.

Eventually I reached the group of tents my family was part of. Solar electricity panel light inside the tents made them resemble patches of stars in the sky. The dogs discovered me and began barking ferociously. My heart beat faster as I passed the tents one by one. My family tent was third from the top.

Sheep surrounded the yaks. Most yaks were sleeping. Some chewed their cuds. My family dog saw me, barked, and then stopped. It seemed to recognize me.

Father came out of the tent with a flashlight to see why our dog was barking. I coughed so Father would hear. He shouted "Lhu b+ha? and then shouted into the tent, "Hey! Son is coming!"

All my family members came outside. They were glad to see me and asked if I was afraid on such a dark night. My two sisters, Brother, and my parents were there. It was now about ten o'clock. They were just having dinner.

Father asked, "How about your school life? How is the school food?"

I reported that I was doing well in school and the food was good. He nodded skeptically and told Mother to give me some mutton. "I understand there is little meat in the school food," he said.

He was right. Indeed, there was little meat in the school food, but I did not say so because my parents would worry about me. Mother gave us all as much food as we wanted. After a great meal, we prepared to go to bed.

Father and I lay on the *hu tse* together. Mother took food to our black dog. She quickly came back and called Father, "Hey! Come! Our horses are gone!"

"They must have been stolen. Sgrol kho, get my rifle," Father said, pulling on his robe. The weather was cooler and windy. A storm was brewing.

"Take Rin chen tshe ring with you, otherwise, we will worry about you out there are all alone," Mother urged.

I hoped Father would take Brother with him, but he worried that Brother would get sick in the cold, wet weather and refused.

I stood in front of our tent and watched Father walk away, looking for a horse to borrow. I desperately wanted to be strong enough to help him. I despised my weak self and vowed that I would become a hero who would protect our family property.

Father soon returned with a white horse and called Mother to bring a saddle and hold the horse's reins. As Mother handed the saddle to Father she murmured. "Take care! Horses are important, but your well-being is everything."

Although I was just a little boy, I understood the difficulty of being a man without brothers and sisters. I knew Father's life was littered with many sad experiences.

And then Father suddenly was gone, like a butterfly in the boundless, limitless darkness with only the decreasing clatter of his horse's hooves testifying to his departure.

That night passed as slowly as a tortoise crawls. It started pouring. Mother didn't sleep. Her fingers counted her string of prayer beads hundreds of times as she quietly chanted. Meanwhile my sisters were immersed in their dreams.

Brother lay on his back, staring at the top of the tent.

I listened to the rain.

We silently waited for Father, thinking about nothing else.

Later, the rain let up and became gentle enough for a honeybee to fly. We continued waiting. Silence clutched our tent. Dogs barked vividly sometimes. Some young men had surrounded a girl's tent. I went out hoping to see a ray from Father's flashlight. The young men searching for girls sang love songs, and whistled. Then I saw Father returning. He was on a mountaintop. I jumped up happily and called Mother. We made a fire in the stove before he arrived.

Father returned and said, "Our horses were stolen by two men from the east. I saw their tracks in the mud, but I didn't catch up with them. Maybe they are from A mchog (Gansu Province). In 'Bo ra Village, men steal to show their courage. It won't be easy to get our horses back. I'll go to Rong bo Monastery and consult our *bla ma* tomorrow. Sgrol kho! You take care of our livestock and make sure

Rin chen tshe ring herds the sheep well. Now we should sleep. I have a long journey tomorrow."

Mother got up at the first sound of a sparrow the next morning. She tried to make a fire in our adobe stove but could not. The fuel was sodden from the rain. Murmuring she tied a sash around her tattered robe, and hurried to a neighbor's tent to get some smoldering dung.

I drifted between consciousness and dreams. Still, I could sense the slight odor of smoke from the wet wood Mother had tried to set afire.

The bandits' attack continued to make me deeply uncomfortable.

Father got up after a bit and exited the tent. I didn't know where he went. I guessed he went to borrow a horse to hurry to the township town before the bus left for Rong bo.

I stayed in bed a bit longer and then completely woke. My continuing sense of anxiety pulled me from my pillow.

"You should sleep till after I finish milking," suggested Mother. She had returned with a big metal dipper full of smoldering yak dung.

I stepped outside and noticed the clouds lifting above our tent and our neighbors' tents. The whole world of that valley was slowly coming awake, silently and gently.

Father soon returned, riding a horse he had borrowed from one of my aunts. Mother prepared some dried cheese and butter to give the *bla ma*. A kettle of milk tea began nosily boiling.

After breakfast Father rode off. I stood by the tent door and watched his figure steadily diminishing, a white bag with his gifts strapped to his back.

Mother finished milking, handed the pail of milk to me, and then untied the yaks.

Several older, neighboring men came to our tent and asked Mother details of the theft. Soon, more of our community members came, asking if we needed help in searching for the horses.

"We need to chant scriptures and offer a big incense offering. This is what a local tantric specialist advised last time this happened," suggested Mother.

Our visitors helped us make the incense materials and chanted scriptures while offering the incense. Meanwhile, some women helped Mother fry bread, boil tea and mutton, and cook noodles with onion and mutton for the helpers. At about two PM, the helpers ate meat, noodles, fried bread, yogurt, and sipped tea.

During lunch, an elder said, "Thieves can't steal the livestock they want only because of our deities' protection. Even if they do steal, nothing good will come to them. Years ago, some of our yaks were stolen and then many unpleasant things happened to the thieves as they were driving the yaks to their home. Several of the yaks charged the thieves, stood on their hind legs, and bellowed in strange ways, displaying our mountain deity's anger."

I totally believed this and was amazed

Two of my maternal uncles went to Bla brang Monastery after lunch to talk to some of their friends there, to see if they had any suggestions. Other visitors also left.

My family offered more *bsang* and invited two tantric specialists to chant scriptures.

Father returned the next day and said that he had consulted our great *bla ma* who advised, "Don't spend much effort on searching for the horses. My divination says the horses may come back home on their own."

Having talked to their contacts at Bla brang, my uncles returned, and reported, "The thieves are from 'Bo ra Village in A mchog. Once your property is stolen by men from 'Bo ra, it is not cheap to recover whatever was taken. They customarily do not return what they have stolen without substantial payment."

I turned to Father and said, "Why don't we catch the thieves if we know who they are?"

"We never know who the thief really is. The thief gives information to someone that we contact. That go-between never tells

who the thief is. He also may not know, but we can negotiate about payment through the go-between."

When the locals learned more about my family's missing horses, many came and offered to help. There was little we thought we could do other than beseech the deities for help. Meanwhile, Father went to A mchog and learned that the thieves were demanding 3,000 RMB per horse, which was very near the cash value of the horses. Father loved the horses and was prepared to pay, but our relatives didn't agree.

Time passed and my family accepted our loss. We decided to relinquish our anger and sense of loss.

Very unexpectedly about ten days later, our horses were back in their enclosure with pieces of broken white rope around their neck.

Mother cried, "Our *bla ma* watches over us!"

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'bo ra དཔོ་ར

a mchog ແມ່ຂອງ

bla brang ບුඩ්

bla ma ບුඳා

bsang ດසන

Gansu 甘肃

hu tse ປູເສ

klu sgrub ສුංඡ

lcags so lhun' grub རྒྱାଗ୍ རྩୁନ' རୁବ

lhu b+ha ປູ້ຫຸ້

rin chen tshe ring ຮີນ ຕ්සේ ຮິං

rong bo ຂົດສູ

sgrol kho ສູ້ຫົວ

NEARLY GORED TO DEATH

Lcags so lhun 'grub བྱାଣଙ୍କୁର୍ମୁଖ୍-ଦ୍ୱାଷା (Klu sgrub བྱାଣଙ୍କୁର୍)

I was ten years old. It was spring. The ground was mostly green. Some locals would soon leave to collect caterpillar fungus. Others were anxiously preparing to move their livestock and tents to new pastures.

My family did not see me as very helpful because I was younger than my two sisters and brother, who were old enough to help my parents with everything. On the other hand, I was lucky to be young and so mischievous that my parents decided to send me to primary school, hoping my personality might change. This was the only reason they sent me to school.

When we had a holiday, I stayed at home and did little but, one day, one of my sisters asked me to help her herd our yaks on a mountain.

I didn't much like herding.

Aware of that, she put some candies in a bag.

I calculated I could get some even if I played with the little yak calves. I put on a red, tattered robe and tied it with an old, faded sash. Mother stuffed a little food into a yellow bag and said, "Don't go near a new mother yak. She will charge and gore you."

I assured her I wouldn't and rushed outside. Sister and I followed our yaks. She said, "Hey! Can you climb up that high mountain? I don't believe that you can do it. If you will stay with me all day, these candies will belong to you."

I confidently promised that I could do it and we started herding our yaks up the mountain.

At about eleven AM, the sky was as blue as a pristine mirror. A bright sun shone moving ever higher up a high mountain peak. I

felt good, but realized that my sister was unhappy. When I asked why, she said, "You're too young to understand."

I then found an excuse to make her laugh and was glad when I saw her pearly teeth. I continued talking as we climbed up the mountain.

At midday, we ate on the mountain top. I hoped to get some candy but I said nothing.

She asked suspiciously, "Don't you want some candy?" and then gave me all the candy, saying, "If you will come with me to herd after your holiday, I'll buy you many candies and toys."

"You really want me to herd every day?" I asked.

She replied, "You must study hard. Don't drop out of school. You are much luckier than me, because you'll have the chance to choose your future. That's wonderful. Maybe you don't understand what I'm saying. Anyway, just remember to never stop your schooling."

I had never realized that she had ever wanted to go to school. I knew she had never attended school, even for a few days. Mother was sometimes ill and very much needed her help.

We have a proverb, *Bu mo 'gro sa gnas, ban de 'gro sa sgar* 'Women must marry, monks must be in a monastery'.

Sister was now at the age to marry.

Around two PM the sun ended its upward ascent and began descending. Sister told me to look for the yaks. I did so and found them. A bunch of little calves were playing with each other.

I was fascinated by little calves, particularly Dkar ril 'white faced calf'. It ran back and forth in front of the other calves.

When I and my siblings were little, we each had our own lamb, foal, and calf. We were very aware of their different coloration and named them accordingly. We also took very good care of "our" special livestock, which we didn't let Father sell.

I had often stolen milk from our milk bucket and given it to Dkar ril. He followed me wherever I went.

I climbed to the foot of the mountain where the calves were running and went near Dkar ril, even though his mother was nearby. I was a little scared because Mother had warned me, "Never go near a new mother yak. Her horns can be eighteen arm spans long and she may injure a child like you."

Dkar ril ran to me and began nursing my thumb as though it were a teat. Meanwhile, the other calves raced to their mothers.

I pulled out a piece of bread from my robe pouch and tried to give him, but it scattered on the ground. Dkar ril seemed to think that Mother's delicious bread was poison. I decided then that yaks and people have a different sense of taste.

Sister called me once, then twice. She didn't notice me, but I could see her on the peak of a hill, holding her slingshot. Wanting to frighten her, I didn't reply. Instead, Dkar ril and I hid behind a boulder out of her sight.

Sister began climbing down. A bit later, I heard her scold, "Where is that little snot?"

When she got close, I rushed out and yelled, "Hey! Hey!"

She was shocked, not by me but by Dkar ril. When she was five a dog had bitten her so terribly that Father shot the dog. At first glance she had thought Dkar ril was a dog.

My shouts disturbed the yaks. Some ran off, but a new mother yak rushed at me, tossing her long horns. I had no choice but to run, looking back as I ran into a valley. I imagined a sharp-pointed horn laying me open and then wearing my intestines on its horn.

"Hide in a cave! Hide in a cave!" Sister shouted.

I suddenly remembered a small cave just a bit in front of me. As I scrambled into the cave, the yak's horn caught and broke the string of my amulet. Meanwhile, the yak charged down into the valley, unable to stop its forward movement.

My heart nearly jumped into my mouth. I stayed in the cave until Sister ran to me and cried in a trembling voice, "Are you hurt?"

'No!' I exclaimed and then remembered to cry, warm tears running down my cheeks, plopping onto Sister's blue, long-apron.

"You're fine now! You're as brave as Father. That mother yak won't come back. I'll beat her if she does. I'm right here," comforted Sister.

Dkar ril also ran to us and butted my shoulder with his head as if checking to see if the mother yak had injured me. After a while, I remembered that I had lost my amulet so I quickly retrieved it and put it back around my neck.

We drove our yaks back home around six that evening.

Years later when Sister told Mother about this incident, Mother said, "Your amulet is very special. It protects you from harm. Never take it off, especially when you are in school or far from home.'

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bu mo 'gro sa gnas, ban de 'gro sa sgar བཻມོ་'ག୍ରོ ສା ཁ୍ନେସ, ບାନ ଦେ ଗ୍ରୋ ସା ଶଗ

dkar ril པକାର ରିଲ

klu sgrub ཀ୍ଲୁ ଶ୍ରୁବ

lcags so lhun' grub ད୍ଲାଙ୍ଗୁ ଶୋ ଲୁଣ' ଗ୍ରୁବ

LIFE

Bla ma skyabs བླ་ମା ଶ୍ୟାବସ

I had a female yak when I was a young child and drank her milk, which helped me grow. She was like a mother.

One day I got very sick and was put in the hospital. My family did not have enough money for my medical care so Father sold the female yak to pay for my treatment.

That yak saved my life again.

While I was in the hospital, an old relative came to visit. Knowing that I liked stories, he told me this one:

Many years ago, all the villagers were talking about Zhao ma's baby. Elders wondered who the baby's father was. Others curiously gossiped about who Zhao ma's lover was. There were no clues.

Zhao ma had been orphaned at the age of ten when her mother died from cancer. After her mother died, she worked for a wealthy family herding calves and collecting fuel. She did not know who her father was and never asked. She lived in her small adobe house. This life made her mature quickly. She took care of herself and became increasingly independent.

She was slim and had long hair, bright eyes, thick eyebrows, and even tidy teeth that were as white as pure snow. Many boys lined up and called to her in front of her small house at night, but all failed to gain entry. She remained single. And then suddenly, she had had a child without people having noticed that she was pregnant. Her son, Zha de, had black curly hair that resembled lambskin and large eyes full of cruelty. His hands and feet didn't match his body. They were too big for a ten-year-old child. He was stronger than other children, whom he bullied. Parents hated him and called him Evil Son. He liked hunting and killed countless birds and insects without his mother knowing. Gradually he became a good hunter.

The village consisted of thirty households. There was a dense forest in front of the village and a high range of mountains behind. People had heard that a bear lurked in the forest, but nobody had been injured. Unfortunately, a bear killed two women while they were collecting fuel in the forest. Villagers immediately stopped collecting fuel there. Soon, all the village men gathered to discuss how to kill the bear. Some said to Zha de, "If you are a great hunter, kill the bear."

He proudly answered, "I can kill the bear."

When everyone burst into loud laughter, he angrily declared, "I swear that I will kill it tonight, otherwise I won't come home."

That night he went alone into the forest. Worried that he would never return, his mother went to the local leader, who said, "Probably he's in the forest trying to kill that bear," and then called some men who looked for him everywhere, except in the forest. They found no trace of him. The only hope was to wait until dawn, and then search in the forest.

The sun slowly climbed up from behind a high mountain, gradually illuminating the brittle, frozen grass. Everyone assumed Zha bo had been eaten by the bear. A bit later a person emerged from the forest carrying something black on his back. Everyone was excited and agreed it must be Zha bo. His mother cried and then smiled as Zha bo came nearer with the still-bleeding bear, which was soaked in the bear's blood. Zha bo had slashed the bear's throat with a knife.

The villagers praised him and, from that time, he was no longer Evil Son. People realized he was no ordinary person. In the time of their forefathers, the local mountain god had had sex with a beautiful woman, who had given birth to a special child. This story led people to conclude Zha bo was also a mountain deity's son.

After killing that bear, Zha bo's reputation spread like the wind. He hunted and wandered from place to place, leaving behind valleys full of wildlife skeletons. Wild animals were terrified of Zha bo's scent.

One evening, when Zhao mo was driving twenty yaks back home from behind the mountains, she encountered five mounted bandits with rifles slung on their backs and holding unsheathed swords. Zhao mo had

never encountered such danger before. The bandits rounded up her yaks, grabbed her, and were eager to rape her.

Their leader said, "Stop! We have no time to enjoy this woman."

"My son is a deity's son and will kill you. Leave my yaks, please," Zhao mo said quietly.

The bandits glanced at each other, laughed, and said, "Such ridiculous boasts! Tell your son to find us," and then they left with the yaks.

After Zhao mo got home and told her son what had happened, he was so angry that his feet were trembling. He rushed outside without a word.

His mother followed and shouted, "Don't kill them!"

Zha bo soon reached a road he knew the brigands would take. When they arrived, he said, "Leave the yaks and I'll be merciful."

"You must be Deity Son," the leader laughingly exclaimed as his fellows burst into crazy laughter. Zha bo slowly moved toward them. They shot at him, but he dodged and suddenly vanished. Surprised and frightened, they searched for him until he suddenly jumped on the bandit leader, pulled him off his horse, grabbed his rifle, and smashed his head with his rifle butt, cracking his skull open like a watermelon. The other men were too scared to shoot and fled without a backward glance.

A female devil lived far from Zha bo's home. A village was in front of a cliff with high, hanging rocks. The female devil lived at the top of the cliff in a deep, dark cave and drank human blood and brains from young men she caught at night. She put a sharp metal point in her mouth, and stabbed it into the men's brains. Nobody had ever seen the devil's face because her hair was so long that it swept the ground like a broom when she walked.

Time passed and many women lost their husbands. Other wives worried about their husbands' fate, but could only beseech Buddha for help. Some strong men with rifles and swords attacked the devil, but nearly lost their lives in doing so.

When Zha bo heard this, he went to that place and rushed to the devil's cave without hesitation. The devil was combing her long hair as

Zha bo entered. She observed Zha bo from head to toe. Some of his black hair fell over his left eye. Only half of his long, high nose was visible. His strong body and long legs made him seem very confident. Feeling shy, she bent her head, hiding her little-girl face.

Zha bo came near her and said, "I have no place to sleep. I want to stay here. Can you share your bed with me?"

She nodded, a contented smile on her lovely face.

Then Zha bo gave her a large animal's stomach that he had pricked thousands of times with a needle and said, "We will cook. Please fetch some water."

The devil excitedly rushed to a small, clear stream at the bottom of the cliff and filled the stomach with water, which leaked out when she was only halfway back. She tried repeatedly, but failed each time.

Finally, she pulled out some of her own hair and tied each puncture in the stomach. After doing this, she was nearly bald. Zha bo put some yogurt in a black round pot, wrapped it in some clothes, put it on the bed, and arranged it so that it seemed he was sleeping there. He then destroyed everything he could find in the cave. When he finished, it seemed a battle had been fought.

After the devil tiredly entered the cave and saw the destruction in her home, she angrily tossed the water she was carrying away, put the metal tip in her mouth, stabbed the pot, then exclaimed, "This man's brains are sour!"

Zha bo swiftly shot her with his rifle from where he was hiding. She screamed and fled, leaving a bloody trail. Zha bo followed her, but finally lost her in the forest. Afterwards, village women no longer worried about their husbands. Everyone agreed that the local mountain god had sent Zha bo to vanquish the female devil.

This story made me feel better.

I got well, left the hospital, went home and then went to the yard to see my female yak.

She was gone and I understood what had happened.

I cried when I thought about that yak that had saved my life twice. Even today, I think about my female yak when I drink milk tea.

•••

Time passed and I was eight years old (1998).

My parents were sufficiently embarrassed about Brother's unmarried status at the age of twenty that they arranged his marriage. Neighbor boys his age were married and some of them already had children. Furthermore, bad rumors circulated in the village about my family being too poor to take a bride. My parents were under a lot of pressure to find a wife for Brother, who already seemed to be past the ideal age of marriage.

My village was divided by a dusty endless road that ran between Bla brang and Mtsho sngon. Passengers in passing vehicles could enjoy grassland that seemed to rival the size of a huge piece of sky that might have plummeted to earth in a place where people relied solely on livestock to survive. They continued to follow the example of their ancestors. When children were eighteen years old, they soon married.

Lives were, however, slowly changing and improving. Gradually people competed in accumulating jewelry and other personal adornments, especially for brides.

During the Tibetan New Year period, I was very excited to see Sister-in-law when she first visited my home. Sister-in-law is Father's sworn-brother's daughter so Father was not required to spend a huge amount on decorations. Nevertheless, Father sold one hundred sheep from our total sheep flock at that time, which numbered about 300. If it had been someone else, Father's sworn-brother would probably have demanded what would have required the selling of at least 200 sheep. At that time, one sheep was worth about 200 RMB. All the proceeds of this went to buy decorations for the bride - coral, silver, and gold.

Father did his best for his son.

Brother looked unhappy when his bride arrived. They didn't know each other very well. Father had done everything related to the

marriage. He had chosen the bride, decided how many sheep to sell, and so on.

Sister-in-law was slender, had two long braids, was a little taller than Brother, quiet, and very respectful of older people. Nevertheless, the new couple had little interest in each other, perhaps because they were strangers. At times, Brother spent the nights with other girls. Despite what may have been a complex association, nothing on the surface seemed wrong about their relationship.

Days passed. Months passed. Time passed as quickly as a flowing stream. My parents expected a grandson. When this did not happen, my parents invited four monks to come and chant in our home for a day. Mother also accompanied Sister-in-law to a sacred cave where women spend the night if they wish to become pregnant.

About a year later, Sister-in-law gave birth to a thin but healthy boy. Sister-in-law breastfed Nephew, but she didn't have enough milk to satisfy him so I occasionally held him and fed him milk from a bottle. I still treasure that experience of holding Nephew the first time.

When Nephew was three months old, Sister-in-law took him to her parents' home, where he became seriously ill. My parents were very anxious about their grandson, and consulted two high ranking *bla ma*, who recommended taking the baby to hospital. However, the doctors that were consulted could not identify Nephew's illness. He seemed incurable. He began taking less milk and constantly cried.

Mother suggested that Nephew had been possessed by evil from Sister-in-law's brother's wife whose five children had all died. Meanwhile, Sister-in-law's tears seemed never to stop falling.

At that time, my family's winter sheep enclosure was about a twenty-minute walk from our home. After supper, Father and Brother took turns watching the sheep all night to prevent wolf attack and protect against thieves.

Sometimes, Brother took me with him when it was time for him to keep watch and then left me alone so he could visit girls. I was terrified of being left alone in the very dark night. However, I agreed

because he lent me his battery-powered cassette-player. I loved listening to love songs and Sman bla skyabs' comedy sketches.

There was also another reason I agreed that Brother could leave me alone. He controlled our family's bicycle as the oldest son. Few families had a bicycle at that time. He promised that, the next day, I could ride the bike. He also showed me about thirty photos he had of his girlfriends. He kept the photos in a white envelope in his robe pouch. He also confided, in an uncaring way, that after Nephew died, he would divorce.

I quietly hated him when he said that. I loved Nephew very much and I didn't want to hear that he might soon die. Still, I didn't say anything because I was afraid he wouldn't allow me to use the bicycle.

The night Brother told me this, and after he left, I was both afraid and angry. I kept our flashlight the whole night. That made me feel better. I was excited to listen to my favorite tapes and gradually, I grew accustomed to sleeping alone.

The next day, after I had made my bargain with Brother, I rode the bicycle, sticking one foot through the middle opening in the frame. The bike was much too large for me to propel it any other way. Other children enviously followed me, pushing the bike from behind. I and the other children thought this was so exciting that we never felt hungry. I was extraordinarily happy and very proud of riding my bicycle in front of other children.

As Nephew got steadily worse, and it seemed death was near, my parents became increasingly frantic and Sister-in-law was terribly depressed. At this point, Father decided to invite a famous lay tantric specialist to our home. Though locals knew his name, they didn't know exactly where he was from. He had saved some children while some other children whom he had treated had died. Anyway, this seemed to be the only remaining possibility.

It was a winter day made warmer by a bright sun and a frozen creek that twinkled in the distance. Suddenly, our watchdog barked desperately as Father and the specialist approached. I hid behind

Mother and peeked out at the specialist, who had his hair in one long braid wrapped around his head and wore a robe like that of a monk. He was tall, strong, and had a dark face that was decorated with many whiskers. He looked dangerous.

He told Father to bring Nephew. Father did so and then the specialist watched him without saying anything. Next, he took some *rtsam pa*, mixed it with water, and then made an image the same size as Nephew, which he dressed in colored cloth. He put soot on Nephew's face.

He began chanting loudly while sometimes beating a drum and now and then sounding a trumpet made from a human thighbone. After about three hours of this, he told Father to throw the *rtsam pa* image out of our courtyard. He then ordered Father, Mother, Sister-in-law, and one of my sisters to each hold one of Nephew's limbs. He then took a pair of scissors and cut Nephew on each hand, halfway between the thumb and index finger. He took a big scoop and flung milk mixed with warm water on Nephew's body.

Nephew cried desperately until he was hoarse, but he never lost consciousness. This was already a marked improvement because, earlier when Nephew cried, he became unconscious.

Gradually, Nephew grew stronger until he had absolutely recovered. Now, he is sixteen and a middle school student.

Today, does Brother still have an ever-growing number of photos of beautiful young women, or is there only one person today in his heart - his wife? I'm unsure.

•••

Four more years passed. I was twelve, the age when I became a real man. At that time my duty was to herd my family's yaks. In the morning after breakfast, I usually drove our yaks with my fellows behind the mountains. Herdsman had gathered there as usual when I arrived that morning. They were talking about their sexual adventures and teasing boys, "Let me check your penis to see if you have become a real man."

I was wearing a short sheep-skin robe Mother had made. My slingshot was as long as I was tall. I had tied it around my waist to keep warmer. I slowly drove my yaks to the foot of the mountain and went over to the older men, who were discussing who had had the greatest number of sexual adventures. One man boasted that he had had sex with at least one hundred women. As he gestured with his hands and made sounds indicating what he had done, boys watched him and laughed so hard that they rolled on the ground.

Finally, an older man said to me, "Have you become a real man?"

I silently ran away, but I couldn't run very fast because my shoes were much bigger than my feet. The older man easily caught me and said, "That means you aren't a real man. Let me check your penis."

I cried, "No! No!" and struggled. He and two more men easily untied my red sash, pulled off my tattered blue pants with black cloth patches on each side of the legs, wiggled my penis, and laughed uproariously.

One older man said, "You should be punished for escaping," picked up some sheep dung, wetted it with saliva, put the sheep dung on a plant, and rubbed it on my bottom.

I cried and laughed, because it tickled me.

Afterwards, eager to become a real man, I wanted to have sex with a woman as soon as possible. One night after dinner, knowing that Brother had many girlfriends, I said to my parents, "I will sleep with Brother tonight."

"I want to have sex with one of your girlfriends. Please, take me with you tonight," I said as soon as we were alone.

He smiled and said, "Okay. Get ready."

I was very excited and washed at least nine layers of dirt from my filthy hands and sunburned face which I hadn't washed in about two months. I smeared fresh butter on my face and cleaned my nose, from which a small natural white stream usually ran. I achieved the best style ever in the few years of my life. We then walked through a

village where crazy dogs desperately barked to the accompaniment of clanging chains. I was terrified and looked back at the dogs several times. Finally, we reached a small adobe house. Brother knocked and called, "Lha mo! Lha mo!"

Someone unlocked the door from inside. We entered silently. A woman was on a big bed. Brother took off his shoes and got under the woman's thick quilt. "Come here," he said to me and opened the quilt between him and the woman. I rushed there without even taking off my shoes. I was too nervous to move. My whole body quivered like a vibrating machine.

"He's my younger brother. He wants to be a real man," Brother explained.

"He's still a child," the woman giggled.

"Please, let him do it," Brother said and rolled me on top of her.

I gripped Brother's hand and wanted to say, "No," but I couldn't say anything. He pulled my pants down to my shoes. I still couldn't move, because my heart was beating too fast. Lha mo touched my penis, giggled, and put it inside her vagina, which was as warm as hot spring water. Meanwhile she moved up and down under me.

"Brother, I have to pee!" I cried a short time later.

Brother rolled toward the window, laughing loudly. Suddenly, I splashed something inside her and felt released from nervousness and fear.

When I got home, the tip of my penis was aching and bleeding. I had given my virginity to an unknown woman and had no idea what her face looked like, but I was very proud to have become a real man.

Gradually, I fell in love with a woman who was already married and had one child. She was almost fifteen years older than me. I followed and teased her when she was herding. Sometimes she pushed me down and pinched my bottom repeatedly until it became as red as though countless mosquitoes had bitten it.

I struggled, but I couldn't escape. I begged her to let me free and promised not to tease her again.

One day she said, "I have something to do tomorrow. Can you take care of my yaks?"

"I will, if I can come to your place tonight," I replied.

"Not today. My husband is at home tonight. Maybe you should come tomorrow," she said with a suggestive smile.

I herded our yaks together the next day and fantasized about having sex with her. The sun slowly hid behind the mountains and I and the other herdsmen took our livestock home.

After supper, I cleaned up and went to her house quietly. I knocked on the door and called out, "Older Sister!"

I heard someone coming to the door. Unfortunately, it was her husband who opened the door and yelled, "Bastard!"

I raced away without looking back. He threw a stick after me, which hit my right leg.

The next day I could hardly walk, but I still drove my yaks out to herd. She came to me and said, "Are you okay? I was teasing yesterday. Let me see your injury."

I silently hiked up my right pants leg.

She pointed to my leg and said, "It's swollen," and then she rubbed my leg lightly over and over. I saw her big breasts jiggling in her blouse, and recalled the first woman I had had sex with. I realized I had something as hard as a stake tent inside my pants.

She noticed and smiled.

"Older Sister, let me do it," I pleaded, bowing my head.

"You can, if you can push me down," she responded.

I jumped on her and she easily fell over.

After doing it, we jumped up. The other herders had already disappeared. It was rapidly becoming darker.

After a week, I heard that she and her husband had gone to Lha sa to do business.

I never saw her again.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bla brang བ୍ରାଙ୍

bla ma skyabs བ୍ରାମଶ୍ଵର

lha mo བ୍ଲାମୋ

lha sa བ୍ଲାସ

mtsho sngon མକ୍ଷସ୍ନଗ

rtsam pa རତ୍ସମ

sman bla skyabs ལ୍ମବ୍ଲାଶ୍ଵର

zha bo ཚାବୋ

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ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES

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BELOVED ANIMALS

KHO LU

Sangs rgyas bkra shis བංඛ རුං སං རු ཕ්

I was born in 1991 in Lo ba Village, Gcan tsha thang Township, Gcan tsha County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province.

My neighbor, Uncle Zon thar, took good care of a lamb, because his mother died. He heated yak milk, poured it into a bottle, put a nipple on the bottle, and fed the little lamb until it could eat grass. Uncle Zon thar's family members also cared for the lamb when Uncle Zon thar was not at home.

The lamb was so accustomed to living near Uncle Zon thar's family that he often did not go with other sheep. When he grew older, he did not want to go far from home and often followed the herdsmen, even though they shooed him away.

Family members often gave food to Kho lu, which is a name local people give to lambs that are rejected by ewes or the ewe dies and then locals raise such lambs.

When Uncle Zon thar's family members called "Kho lu!" he would come, hoping to receive such tidbits as bread, leftover noodles, and milk tea.

About a year later, the family selected ten fat sheep to sell - including Kho lu - put them in a truck, took them to the county town, and sold them to some Muslim businessmen. When Uncle Zon thar was about to leave, Kho lu ran to him three times, even when people threw stones at him and tried to stop him.

Finally, the Muslim traders tied Kho lu and were about to put him in a truck. Watching Kho lu's struggles and his obvious distress, Uncle Zon thar decided he did not want to sell him and brought Kho lu back home. Uncle Zon thar said that when Kho lu was struggling to run to him, he could not bear his sense of abandonment. He said, "I

am truly glad that I did not sell Kho lu. I will never try to sell him again."

The family's affection for Kho lu grew stronger.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

kho lu གྲୁ

gcan tsha ສະຫັກ

gcan tsha thang ສະຫັກສຳ

Huangnan 黃南

lo ba ལྷ

Qinghai 青海

rma lho རྒྱା

sangs rgyas bkra shis བྱନ୍ଦୁ རྒྱା དྲୋ

zon thar ཇྰସ

YELLOW-HEAD HORSE

Sangs rgyas bkra shis རྒྱྲ་ସྙྰ་ସ୍କྲྲླྷ

My family had a stallion we called Rta mgo ser 'Yellow-Head Horse'. Father and two of his brothers occasionally rode it. Father said that Yellow-Head was very wild when it was taken to join local horseraces. I didn't believe that because Yellow-Head was very gentle when Mother rode it to the local monastery and also when I rode it.

Grandmother said that Yellow-Head was especially gentle around children and women.

Father said that the Yellow-head was only gentle with my family members.

Grandmother told me that the Yellow-Head was the most beautiful and the fastest horse in our local community and that just after he was born, many visitors had come to see him because he was as white as pure milk.

Later his head gradually became yellow.

"Many outsiders heard about Yellow-Head, but never heard about our family," Grandmother commented.

In about 1999, the summer horse race was approaching and Father bridled Yellow-Head a few days before the race. Father said, "Yellow-Head is as clever as a person. If he suspects people are gathering, it is impossible to catch him."

Father and I led Yellow-Head's by his reins to the horse race. It took us about a half hour to get to the race site where there was a huge crowd. Yellow-Head tried to run away, but Father's elder brother and five other men came and forcefully led Yellow-Head to the other racehorses. When it was Yellow-Head's turn, he jumped, pranced, and kicked at everyone. About six people held him by the ears, tail, and reins.

Only Grandmother's relative, Yul lha thar, could ride him in a competition. The top three horses started, but the men still held Yellow-Head. When the horses in the lead got halfway to the finish line, the men released Yellow-Head, who flew as fast as a bird and won the competition.

Neighbor community members cursed Yellow-Head, because he always won.

Many people wanted to buy Yellow-Head, promising to pay whatever we asked, but no one in my family wanted to sell him because my family had a strong affection for Yellow-Head.

In the winter of 2000, many local horses were stolen, including Yellow-Head. Grandmother and Mother were very sad. They worried that the thieves would sell it to people who, they had heard, slaughtered horses with machines and then ate them.

Grandmother chanted *ma Ni* and burned butter lamps for Yellow-Head.

Five days after he was stolen, Mother got up early as usual, cleaned the adobe stove, and took the ash outside. Suddenly we heard her shout that Yellow-Head had returned. We all ran out and saw Yellow-Head outside of our house. Wounds on his back proved that the thieves had beaten him. Father gently washed his wounds and smeared antibiotic ointment on them.

My family members believed that Yellow-Head was an auspicious animal for our family and we resolved to never sell or kill him.

Three years later, my family was in the winter pasture where there was very little grass because it had snowed heavily. Father and my neighbor took Yellow-Head and three other horses to a mountain forest and left them, because there was more grass there than on the grassland. It took about seven hours to walk to that forest.

When Father and my neighbor went to find the horses in the spring, they found Yellow-Head dead in the bottom of a valley. Father said that it seemed Yellow-Head had tried to eat grass on a very steep

rocky mountain and then fell, probably, he conjectured, because the snow made the rocks very slippery.

The other three horses had vanished. Maybe thieves had stolen them.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

rta ngo ser རྩ་ଓର୍ଗେସ୍
sangs rgyas bkra shis ལୁଙ୍‌କ୍ୟାନ୍‌ମ୍ବାଶିସ୍
yul lha thar རୁଙ୍‌ଲ୍ହାତର

RAG DRUG: A FAITHFUL HORSE

Lcags so lhun 'grub བྱାଙ୍ଗ-ରୁଗ୍-ଦୂମ (Klu sgrub བྱାଙ୍ଗ-ଦୂମ)

My family had three horses in 2016, but when I was about five years old (2006) we had seven horses. Over time, we sold four horses to people living in other communities. We do not want to sell horses to Chinese and Muslim businessmen because Father says, "They take the horses directly to big slaughterhouses and kill them." Instead, we prefer to sell our livestock, including sheep, yaks, and goats to Tibetans, even though the payment is less.

Before I started school, I herded my family's sheep in the mountains and often rode Rag drug, a name based on his color - yellowish-brown. Rag drug was very loyal to and gentle with each of my family members. We rode him everywhere - to herd, go on journeys, participate in festivals, and for pasture transportation. None of us every had any trouble with him and all my family members were willing to give him fresh grass.

This continued until he was four years old. Unexpectedly, one of my father's friends was eager to buy Rag drug and Father finally agreed because of their friendship. We all felt regretful and missed him, though we could not say anything because it was Father's decision.

When Rag drug left, tears streaked my cheeks. Father comforted, "Don't worry! I'm sure your Rug drug will be happy and my friend promised that he wouldn't sell him to butchers!"

One early morning about twenty days later, we found Rag drug frolicking with our other horses. When he noticed smoke coming out of our home's chimney, he came over. It seemed he was checking to be sure our family members were fine.

Mother spread out some straw for him, and he nuzzled her to show how glad he was.

Lcags so lhun 'grub. 2017. Red drug: A Faithful Horse. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:82-83.

We all wanted him to stay with us but Father's friend came the next day. For the next fifteen years, he periodically escaped from his new owner's home.

Last year, he was nineteen years old. Father bought him back from his friend and promised that we would never allow anyone to take him from our family again. Meanwhile, Father asked our local *bla ma* for some prayer flags for Rag drug, which we wove into his mane to protect him against evils and wolves

Today, he goes freely wherever he likes on our pastures, his protection prayer flags waving in the wind.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

klu sgrub ཀླྷ ཉ

lcags so lhun' grub ལྕ བྱ ཉ ཁྱ ཉ

rag drug རା གྔ

G.YANG RTA: A GENTLE WHITE HORSE

Rin chen don 'grub རින་චෙන་ດොན་'ග୍ରུབ

When I was seven (the year 2000) my family had ten horses. These horses were very important, especially when we moved from one pasture to another. Among the horses was G.yang rta - a gentle, white horse.

There were five children in my family aged from five to ten. When we moved to a new campsite, we could not walk for a long distance, and Mother could not carry us all, therefore, our dear Gyang rta helped carry us.

Mother seemed able to communicate with G.yang rta. Mother was too short to put us in the saddle on G.yang rta's back but, after she spoke to him, G.yang rta would kneel and then she would put two or three of us on his back. Afterwards, Mother did not worry about us and busied herself with herding our yaks. G.yang rta followed Mother and we did not bother using the reins.

We regarded G.yang rta almost as a family member and gave him good food.

Once my brother became very ill and G.yang rta took him back home. We thought G.yang rta had saved Brother's life.

Though G.yang rta was very gentle with our family members, he behaved very differently with strangers.

Then G.yang rta got very ill and died.

Our family was enveloped in a sad, silent, cold atmosphere. We were all extremely sad and some of us wept.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

g.yang rta ལྡྱଙྩା
rin chen don 'grub རୈନ୍ କେଠିର୍ଦ୍ଦନ୍ ସ୍ତୁଷା

BKRA 'DZI THE RACE HORSE

'Jam dbyangs skyabs བྱମ རྒྱଙྩ ཤ୍ୱାଙྩ

When I was about ten years old (2003), my family had twelve horses - five females and seven males. Bkra 'dzi 'white stripes on the forehead' could run faster than all the other local horses and we were all very fond of him, especially my oldest brother.

We gave Bkra 'dzi the best food such as milk, wheat, barley, fresh grass, and fresh water.

Oldest Brother is very good at handicrafts and made reins, a bridle, girth, saddle cover, and other things for Bkra 'dzi. When Oldest Brother took Bkra 'dzi to race, he also made sure Bkra 'dzi was outfitted well.

In the winter when we grazed Bkra 'dzi in the mountains, Oldest Brother covered him with a blanket he had made himself.

Bkra 'dzi was not very gentle, but when Brother rode him, he was very gentle and obedient.

One cold, snowy day, Bkra 'dzi was on the mountains with the other horses. That day, Brother ignored Bkra 'dzi.

Time passed quickly. At dusk my youngest niece and I went to collect our horses. When we got near our them, my niece noticed that Bkra 'dzi was lying down.

I threw some pebbles at Bkra 'dzi, but he did not move.

"Bkra 'dzi is sleeping," my niece said and laughed, but I knew he was dead.

We immediately returned home and I told my sister-in-law. I did not tell Brother because I was afraid he would scold me.

The next morning, Brother got up earlier than usual, washed his face, brushed his teeth, and then got on his motorcycle and headed to the local monastery, which he reached about two hours

later. After arriving he found a very good diviner, Bla ma A khu dpal, and said, "Please, tell me what happened to Bkra 'dzi?"

A khu dpal said, "I know why your Bkra 'dzi died. It was to dispel an obstacle for you. Actually, Bkra 'dzi died for you."

My family invited a few monks to our home and they chanted scriptures for Bkra 'dzi.

We all continue to miss Bkar 'dzi and often talk about him because Bkra 'dzi was our benefactor owing to the many times he won horse races. We also thought Bkra 'dzi's was an incarnation of one of our family's progenitors.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'jam dbyangs skyabs དྱାମ ད୍ୟାଙ୍ଗ ག୍ୱେବ୍
a khu dpal འକୁ ར୍ୱାପାଲ
bkra 'dzi ཚ୍କ୍ରା ར୍ୱିତ୍ସି
khebs ma ཀ୍ହେବ୍ସ ମା

THE BLACK MARE

Tshes bcu lha mo བྲྱྱ རྩ རྒ རྩ

Grandfather (Blo bzang nor bu, 1943) teaches, "Livestock lack the ability to speak but, other than that, they are just like us." This is one reason my brother (Blo bzang, 1992) and I have treated our livestock very kindly since we were children. Another reason comes from observing Grandfather and his compassion for livestock.

One summer (1995) when I was about seven years old, Father (Bsam 'grub, 1967) bought a black pregnant mare from our neighbor. The mare was not young, but it was a good deal, and Father knew that Grandfather would be glad.

The minute Father got home with the mare, Grandfather was so happy that he did not know what to do. He soon began grooming the mare, and wove a colorful necklace out of yarn and tied a handful of amulets to it to protect the mare and its baby. He combed her long tail, braided the hair into a single braid, and tied the end with a long red silk strip. He braided the mane into small sections and tied them with pink silk strips. Finally, he brushed her entire body and then her forelock.

While Grandfather was grooming the mare, he talked to her as though she was a human being.

Normally, villagers took turns looking after all the village's livestock from spring to fall until everyone was done with harvesting, but Grandfather insisted on herding the black mare separately. My parents did not have the time to look after the mare separately so Grandfather had to get up very early no matter if it was raining or sunny. Then he took the mare to graze in the mountains for the entire day.

Mother (Ye shes, 1967) brought breakfast to Grandfather's bedroom every morning and treated him like a king, but he gave up all that and got up at the same time as Mother to care for the mare.

Grandfather fed dried peas to the mare in the morning and afternoon every day, and sometimes he made a special black tea soup for her to drink. Grandfather's life that summer was full of caring for the mare.

My parents were concerned that Grandfather was too tired, but he felt that he had to do his best for the pregnant mare. Grandfather walked on his way to the mountains. He never rode the mare. Sometimes, I went with Grandfather, but I soon felt bored and returned to the village to play with other children, but he seemed to enjoy his time there.

The black mare gave birth to a female foal after a few months. Grandfather was proud and happy that both the mare and the foal were healthy. Afterwards, Grandfather still got up early to herd the mare and its foal separately until the foal was one-month-old.

Sometimes, Grandfather would leave home to attend religious events. The minute he returned home, he would check on the mare and the foal and ask Brother and me if we had followed his instructions to take care of them.

Seven years passed and the black mare was old and slow, and could not keep up with the other horses as they went to the herding pasture. Grandfather then again got up early in the morning and took the mare alone to the mountains and brought her back late in the evening.

The black mare was so well treated that she looked very strong.

Grandfather said, "I'm lucky to have a loving family that takes good care of me, and the black mare is lucky that she has me to care for her."

One snowy winter day, we kept the livestock home and fed them with barley straw. At noon, Mother released all the livestock and drove them to the river. On the way, a neighbor was coming back

from the river where she had watered her livestock. One of her yaks gored the black mare's belly. It was a deep puncture. Father and some neighbors managed to bring the black mare back home, where it died a couple of days later.

We all felt bad. Grandfather would not eat for days. He made butter lamps and lit them in our family shrine room, and chanted scriptures for the horse. Though the black mare was just a horse, it was far more than that for Grandfather.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

blo bzang བློ ཚଙ୍ଗ

blo bzang nor bu བློ ཚଙ୍ଗ ན སୁ

bsam 'grub ད୍ୱାମ ད୍ୱାମ

tshes bcu lha mo བྲ୍ୱା མନ୍ତୁ སୁ

ye shes ཡେ ཕେ

A FAITHFUL DOG

Dbang 'dus sgrol ma བང་දུས་ສྒྲོལ་མ (Wende Zhuoma 文德卓玛)

In a time, incomparably long ago during an era as old as the stars and as long as the rivers, there was a king named A thos, who was renowned for his kindness and courage. The land he ruled was prosperous and peaceful. However, one year a disastrous drought struck and thousands of people died of famine.

As an old granny told this story, she poured milk from a little bowl onto the head of a dog called Sbu ra. It was the first day of Lo sar - 'Tibetan New Year'.

A little boy named Tshe bzang knelt by the old granny.

Granny intoned, "Spro lo! Spro lo!" for the dog, poured a last drop of milk on Sbu ra's head, and continued her story:

King A thos decided to look for grain seeds from the great Ri bdag, the mountain guard, who lived in a very distant land. King A thos climbed over ninety-nine snow-peaked mountains and crossed ninety-nine rushing river torrents before finally reaching his destination. He respectfully prostrated to the great mountain guard and asked for some grain seeds.

However, the great mountain guard, with a beard as long as a waterfall and as thick as yak wool, sadly shook his head and told A thos that a greedy, evil snake controlled all the grain seeds. He also warned King A thos that the evil snake would turn anyone into a dog who came to his place for seeds.

When King A thos insisted on obtaining seeds for his people, the great mountain guard gave him a wind-ball and told him to put it in his mouth.

King A thos soon reached the dark cave of the evil snake and quietly crawled inside. A bright yellow light emanating from the precious seeds twinkled at the deep end of the cave.

The evil snake lay beside the seeds. Just as King A thos was about to put some seeds into his bag, the movement of his hand awakened the sensitive, evil snake who gave a puff of air that turned King A thos into a dog.

Unbothered, King A thos quickly rolled around in the seeds and fled. The evil snake could not catch him because the king was running as fast as the wind with the wind ball in his mouth.

King A thos was delighted with the seeds caught in his tangled hair, and began the journey back to his kingdom. Strong wind blew away some of the seeds, heavy storms meant he lost more seeds, and when he was crossing the ninety-ninth river, the rapid current washed away all the remaining seeds except for one on the end of his tail that he kept high in the air.

Since then, we have had barley in Tibetan areas so it was the dog who brought us food, and now it is the dog who guards us against danger. This is why we must offer the first bit of food to dogs on the very first day of Lo sar.

As Granny concluded her story, she gently stroked Sbu ra.

For the first time, Tshe bzang felt grateful and reverence for Sbu ra, who was strong, black, and covered with thick hair. He could not remember the day Sbu ra was brought to his home, but he had vivid memories of businessmen coming to his home, asking how much it would take to purchase Sbu ra.

Very early the next morning just as Tshe bzang woke up from a dream, he heard a vehicle stop at their house. It was his uncle.

His uncle had become very wealthy buying and selling Tibetan mastiffs at a time when the dogs sold for very high prices - even stray dogs from the streets and the corners of *ma Ni* piles vanished.

His uncle had a very long talk with Tshe bzang's father and in the afternoon, Sbu ra was tied and put in the back of his uncle's vehicle. Then they sped away.

Later it was said that Sbu ra was used for breeding purpose, and that he might never return to Tshe bzang's family.

Three years later, Tshe bzang's uncle returned with Sbu ra. He had lost all his money in the mastiff business.

Tshe bzang's grandmother complained that dogs were sacred beings and doing business in sacred beings would surely lead to misfortune.

Another three years passed and Tshe bzang observed increasing numbers of abandoned mastiffs roaming around towns and monasteries. The collapse of the mastiff business meant that the number of strays rapidly increased - stray mastiffs now seemed as plentiful as Plateau pikas.

These strays suffered from hunger and disease, and fought each other over bits of food.

Stray dog attacks became such a serious security issue that some suggested killing them. As these old memories flashed in his mind, Tshe bzang was glad his uncle had brought Sbu ra back home and had not abandoned him in an uninhabited area nor in a distant street corner.

Tshe bzang was very fond of Sbu ra. He played with him and fed him meat. Each time Tshe bzang went to school, Sbu ra would escort him for some distance and when he returned from school, Sbu ra ran to him, his tail wagging in the air and sniffing around his legs.

Caterpillar fungus season came and students were given time off to collect these precious herbs that provided the main part of local families' income. One early morning on the first day of collecting caterpillar fungus, Tshe bzang's family hurried to distant mountains in the company of hundreds of other villagers. Sbu ra came too, despite Tshe bzang's efforts to chase him back home. Tshe bzang enjoyed the fresh warmth of this sunny day, the vast expanse of the

flower-bejeweled mountains. Moreover, Sbu ra was with him and he could play with him.

As the day wore on and the sunshine grew stronger, Tshe bzang and his family stopped for a simple lunch, and then everyone stood up and scattered like dandelion seeds in the wind. Tshe bzang was the last to finish his lunch of *rtsam pa* and meat, a bit of which he fed Sbu ra.

He took out a white cloth from his shirt pocket and unfolded it carefully to reveal eleven caterpillar fungus. This number was less than others, who already collected between thirty to one hundred pieces. He carefully folded the cloth, leaned back, and squinted in the bright sunlight at a sky as blue as a Plateau lake. Sbu ra lay beside him with his tongue out, which slithered from side to side in his mouth, as he lazily blinked his eyes.

Feeling tired and sleepy after lunch, Tshe bzang gazed at the mountains beyond, which seemed far and unreachable. He wondered if there were more caterpillar fungus on the other side of the mountain and decided to walk there.

Sbu ra followed, lagging about fifteen steps behind him. As they marched further ahead, the sounds of people talking and laughing became indistinct and finally vanished.

Tshe bzang found several caterpillar fungus on his way to the mountain top.

As he climbed higher and higher to the top of the mountain, a dark figure suddenly appeared. He panicked, refocused, and was then certain it was a brown bear. Though it was his first time to encounter one, he was certain based on pictures he had seen and stories he had heard from his parents.

His legs quivered and he felt unable to move. Just as the bear was about to pounce on terrified Tshe bzang, Sbu ra leapt on the bear. Suddenly recalling his father's lessons on what to do when encountering a brown bear, Tshe bzang ran down the mountain. Though he heard Sbu ra wailing in pain, he was too frightened to do anything but continue descending the mountain.

When he reached the area where his parents and the other villagers were, he burst into tears and threw himself into his mother's arms. In a shaky voice, he managed to tell what had happened - Sbu ra was fighting a brown bear to save his life.

Tshe bzang's father called several villagers and they then set off to rescue Sbu ra. They soon found Sbu ra. He was dead, sprawled in a pool of blood.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a thos ໃສ່ງ

dbang 'dus sgrol ma ດັບດຸສກໂຮມ

lo sar ລ້ສາ

ma Ni ມະນີ

ri bdag ຮີບດາ

rtsam pa ຮັສມາ

spro lo ສ້ປ່ອ

sbu ra ສູບາ

tshe bzang ຕ່ເບັງ

Wende Zhuoma 文德卓玛

MDZO MO

G.yang skyabs rdo rje དྲྡྷଙ୍ གྱାବସ ຮ୍ଦୋ ຮ୍ଜେ

"A pha, where is our family's *mdzo mo*?"¹ I asked Father with a heavy heart. I hadn't seen her in the courtyard after I returned with Mother from Brag dmar nang, her natal village. We had gone there to make a New Year visit to my maternal grandparents during the winter holidays.

I missed both the *mdzo mo* and her milk. I had not drunk her milk for about a month and half, but it felt like a year and a half!

The courtyard seemed sad and empty without the *mdzo mo*.

Father explained that he had sold the *mdzo mo* to Lha dpal skam po, a maternal relative from Khri ka.

Sister told everything she had seen while Mother and I were absent. Lha dpal skam po had dug a hole, put the *mdzo mo* inside, and stabbed her neck with a knife. Her tongue moved periodically and she suffered terribly before finally dying. Sister wept as she told us this story. She was extremely sad and hated both Lha dpal skam po for slaughtering the *mdzo mo* and Father for selling her. Unable to change the reality of what had happened, all she could do was sob and be sad.

Sister and I were both angry and considered that man to be our mortal enemy. "Sister, what will do to our enemy?" I asked vehemently.

"I'll never speak to him again, even though he is our relative," she answered.

"How about you?" she asked.

"I will kill him the same way he slaughtered our *mdzo mo* after I grow up," I answered heroically.

G.yang skyabs rdo rje. 2017. Mdzo mo. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:96-99.

¹ A *mdzo mo* is the female offspring of a yak and a cow.

Our strong emotion persisted, even after our parents explained that our *mdzo mo* had been seriously injured, was in constant pain, couldn't walk easily, and was weak.

Well, now for some history about this *mdzo mo*. She was driven from Mang ra to Mu ge thang and then to Mgo mang by Father and his friend, Uncle Mkha byams rgyal. I can't tell the precise time when I started to drink her milk, but I am sure it was before I went to primary school. When I was herding sheep in the mountains, we had milk to drink daily. She was the first milk provider my family owned.

One summer day after school, Sister and I got home and found a baby calf in the yard.

Locals drive the *mdzo mo* to the mountain pastures and keep the calves near their homes, otherwise the calves will drink all the milk. Our *mdzo mo* was a clever creature and always returned home in the afternoon after she was full from eating grass and drinking water. She also led our neighbors' *mdzo mo* and cows. My neighbors did not need to go to the mountains and drive their cows back home since our *mdzo mo* was such a good leader. It seemed that she had an alarm clock, returning home at the exact same time every day.

However, one day she was late. We were worried and went out searching her. Finally, we found her limping home. One of her legs had been seriously injured. When we examined it, it was clear it had been struck by a shovel. A nerve had been cut.

We were very angry.

We asked a number of people and eventually learned that a couple living in a settlement of more than one hundred families were the guilty party.

My parents went to the couple's home to ask why they had mistreated our *mdzo mo*. They replied that the *mdzo mo* had broken some adobe bricks they had made. During this visit, Sister and I played near their home in a grove.

When the couple refused to compensate for injuring our *mdzo mo*, my parents left, saying they were going to report the case to the local police. Sister and I then saw the couple deliberately break a

number of adobe bricks. When the police came, the couple showed them the broken bricks. A few bricks had the *mdzo mo*'s footprints. When Sister and I reported seeing the couple break some of the bricks deliberately, our report was dismissed because we were only children.

My parents applied medicine to the *mdzo mo*'s injured leg and then wrapped it in white cloth.

After a few months, the *mdzo mo*'s leg was a little better but it was clear she would never walk normally again. We then stopped drinking her milk because her health was steadily deteriorating. Sister and I did not complain about this.

This is why Father finally sold the *mdzo mo* to Lha dpal skam who, as fate would have it, never gave Father any money because he was too poor to do so.

Though a number of years have passed, my family members all remember the *mdzo mo* and her calves, who each had a name. The calves mooed when Mother called them and then they would return to our home. The last calf's name was Skams pa. When Mother tells stories about the *mdzo mo* and her calves, she is so emotional she sheds tears.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a pha ໃພາ

brag dmar nang ສາດສັບຕົວ

g.yang skyabs rdo rje ສູນສູນສຸກ

khri ka ຂີ່ກາ

lha dpal skam po ລ້າດພາລັກເມືອງ

mang ra ມັງຮັງ

mdzo mo ມັດຊົມ

mgo mang ມົງກົດ

mkha' byams rgyal ມະນະໂຮມສະຫຼຸມ

mu ge thang ມູກເທັງ

skams pa ສັກສາ

A HEROIC DOG'S LOYALTY

G.yang skyabs rdo rje དྲྙྱାଙ୍ གྱାବସ ຮ୍ଦୋ ຮ୍ଜେ

In summer of 2007, I was a student in Rwa rgya at Snowland Sherig Norbling School. The students in Rwa rgya, and in most other places in Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, had a break for almost one month to collect caterpillar fungus and thus be able to better meet their schooling expenses.

Caterpillar fungus sales are a key income source for herdsmen in most of Mgo log, especially for poor families with few livestock.

People from my home area of Mgo mang and many other places go to Mgo log to collect caterpillar fungus in summer to earn extra income. I had decided to go to Yag cha because my father was already there in Yid bzhing's home. Father was collecting caterpillar fungus while herding the family's yaks consequently, he was not charged a collection fee.

Father met Nor bu there and they became good friends. Father told Nor bu that I was studying in Rwa rgya and would have a break in order to collect caterpillar fungus. Nor bu then agreed that I could stay in his home and, as compensation, only requested that I drive his yaks and sheep back to their enclosures at his home after I concluded collecting fungus each day.

Uncle Nor bu had a huge, lion-like mastiff that Aunt Sgrol tho, Uncle Nor bu's wife, released before we went to bed after supper. The dog barked fiercely at unusual sounds regardless of who or what made them. The dog ran barking here and there. It seemed he did not rest the whole night. Sometime he barked near the tent entrance and at other times, ran barking crazily into the mountains.

At first, I was so timid that I did not go out of the tent to the toilet when the dog was near the tent. It took about two and a half weeks before he began to accept me.

One afternoon after I had finished collecting fungus for the day, I drove the sheep and yaks to Uncle Nor bu's home, which was located on a grassy slope on the middle of a mountain near a valley with a lake.

The dog barked at me because I was still strange to him. I was sure he would have devoured me in a few seconds if his master had not tied him to a thick wooden pole. However, he was seriously injured on this day with many wounds on his head, but he was still very aggressive, baring his fangs at me and other strangers, though he was gentle with his owners.

After I returned to the tent, we all began talking together. My hosts described how the dog had fought wolves the previous night, which explained his injuries. Uncle Nor bu and Aunt Sgrol tho applied marmot oil and other medicines to his wounds. I felt very sorry for the dog, but also admired his courage and loyalty.

After the family cooked dinner, they cooked some meat, fat and wheat flour for the dog. Such attention encouraged the dog to be more loyal to the family and work harder to protect the family's livestock from wolf attack.

On another day, there was heavy rain and hail. Everyone on the mountains collecting caterpillar fungus ran for shelter, either to their homes or under cliffs. I was far from the home I was staying in and no cliffs were near. The hailstones painfully stung my head, hands, and feet, which were in a pair of cheap shoes. I would have crawled into a marmot den if my body had been small enough.

I felt great sympathy for the dogs tied to poles outside their masters' homes, but the dogs watched me, seemingly filled with pity.

The fifteenth day of the fourth lunar month is a special day for Tibetans because it is the anniversary of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and passing away. Most Tibetans believe that collecting caterpillar fungus is fundamentally sinful, and collecting it on that day is even more sinful. Consequently, we stayed in the tent and chatted.

Uncle Nor bu then began making jokes and we almost laughed to death. "What would happen if people could defecate caterpillar fungus?" he asked.

I said, "They would eat all the time hoping to defecate all the time."

We all burst into laughter. My belly ached from laughing so much.

Aunt Sgrol tho went out while we were all enjoying ourselves, but then suddenly rushed back and reported that vultures were hovering above a spot in their pasture.

Guessing that an animal had died, we ran outside and found two lambs that had been killed by wolves. We all felt regretful that the family's dog was tied up, but we understood this was necessary to keep him from attacking people.

Families such as Uncle Nor bu's areas truly need such dogs.

Eventually the dog and I became friends and, after leaving the family, that dog is the sentient being from this experience that I remember the most vividly.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

g.yang skyabs rdo rje ཁྱାଙྡ୍କୁନ୍ଦ୍ର

mgo log མྷྱྲ୍ପୁ

mgo mang མྷྱྲ୍ མଦ୍

nor bu ཉସ୍ତୁ

rwa rgya ར୍ୱା

sgrol tho བྲྱླ୍ପୁ

Sherig Norbling, shes rig nor bu'i gling ଶେରିଗ ନୋରିଙ୍ଗିଙ୍ଗ

yag cha ཝାକ୍କା

yid bzhing ཧିଦ୍ ବଜିଙ୍ଗ

BRTSO 'GRUS

Klu thar rgyal ཀློ དର རྒྱା

Every time I went home and left for school, Brtson 'grus and my mother were always the first to come greet me, and the last to see me off when I left. Brtson 'grus was my family's watchdog, a job he had had for fifteen years.

When I returned home this last summer holiday, I suddenly realized both Mother and Brtson 'grus were aging...

Brtson 'grus first came to my home one cold winter. Father brought him from one of my relatives when he was old enough to eat by himself. He was very small and we thought he would be unable to bear the cold weather and would freeze. My community never brings dogs inside a room where people live. But finally he passed that hard time in a small doghouse we built for him near our house.

We then named him Brtson 'grus 'Conquer Death'. Soon he became my faithful companion and I took him with me wherever I went. I fed him more than five times a day. Mother often reminded me not to feed him too much or his belly would burst.

I had been frightened of dogs since Mother was attacked and bitten by a wild dog one day on her way home after she escorted me to primary school. But it was different with Brtson 'grus. I was never scared of him. He had almost become a family member.

Time went by and as much as a year would pass before I saw him. Nevertheless, he always recognized me. He would jump up with the chain around his neck when he saw me. I think he recognized me from my eyes.

He became a real mastiff that we kept tied during the day and set free at night. It was not respectful to others if we did not tie him during the day. My dreams were never disturbed by thieves or wolves at night after Brtson 'grus came to my home.

When we camped on the summer pasture with our livestock, Brtson 'grus would run around the tent and livestock to make sure that we were all safe. My parents were used to Brtson 'grus' barks.

Mother never forgot to feed Brtson 'grus regularly and he trusted her.

Brtson 'grus did not eat any food that Father offered while Mother was away on pilgrimage one summer for a few days. Maybe Brtson 'grus thought Father was too unfamiliar. He never ate any food from strangers, or maybe he was showing his unhappiness with Father, who had never made time to feed him before.

Brtson 'grus lost the use of his hind legs last June. Mother supposed Brtson 'grus had been intentionally injured by a thief. Brtson 'grus could then only crawl with his front feet. We treated his wounds and he slowly got better.

We did not feel secure without Brtson 'grus' presence and worried wolves would attack our livestock at night. This was different than in previous years when other families enjoyed camping near our tent on the summer pasture, because we were all confident Brtson 'grus would protect us.

One morning Mother found Brtson 'grus near our tent. He had been terribly injured and could hardly move. By the time Mother got near him, he had closed his eyes for the last time.

We found wolf hair between his teeth.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

brtson 'grus དརྩୋ གྲୁସ
klu thar rgyal ཀླཱྀ ཐାର ར୍ୟାଲ

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FOLKTALES

WHY PIKAS HAVE NO TAIL

Gu ru 'phrin las ཇུ་ຮྒྱ ཕྲିନ ལཱྀଁ

'Od dkar (b. 1983) is a native of Smin thang (Mentang) Township, Gcig sgril (Jiuzhi) County, Mgo log (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China. She is a herder with two daughters (b. 1998; b. 2000) and two sons (b. 2000; b. 2002). I recorded this story from 'Od dkar in the summer of 2016 when I returned to my home in the same area where 'Od dkar is from. She is a great storyteller and heard this story from her mother, 'Jig byed mtsho (b. 1953). She is very willing to share her stories with her children and her relatives' children.

My retelling of "Pikas and Mice" reflects what I heard and remembered from others, as well as the version from 'Od dkar.

Long ago, a family of mice and a childless pika couple lived near a boundless, deep emerald lake. The mice and pikas were kind and friendly to each other. No predators bothered them for a long time so they enjoyed living on the verdant grassland and drinking the very fresh water. Their lives were as though they were living in Paradise.

One day Mother Mouse told her babies to collect wild baby yams for supper, and then she visited the pika couple and invited them for supper to express her concern for them. Mother Mouse was a widow whose husband had died years earlier. Sometimes she was lonely for adult company. During the meal, they all cheerfully enjoyed the food.

Mr. Pika noticed the biggest wild yam was in the pot and felt unhappy because he had not been offered this big yam. However, he concealed his anger and returned home with his wife.

When it was time to move from the summer pasture to the winter camp, Mr. Pika helped the mice move their belongings. They reached their destination at noon and got ready for lunch.

Mother Mouse left to fetch water from a distant river. After she left, Mr. Pika saw the big wild baby yam was still in the pot and immediately thought about how to get it. He then said to the baby mice, "My wife and I have invited a monk to chant scriptures so that our lives will be more secure and happy. We need to give something special to the monk. It's good if we give him your big wild baby yam."

The baby mice said, "We can't do that without Mother's permission."

Mr. Pika was annoyed, rushed to the pot, took the big wild baby yam, and left.

When Mother Mouse returned with a bucket full of water, she found all her children were crying. They said, "Mr. Pika stole our big wild baby yam. We could do nothing to stop him."

Mother Mouse was full of anger, rushed to Mr. Pika's home, and pulled off his tail. From that day on, the pika has had no tail.

Mrs. Pika wanted to take revenge, but she knew she could not defeat the mice because of their many children.

When Mr. Pika asked what they should do, his wife said, "When a nation wants to control another country, it must have many soldiers or it cannot win battles."

Mr. Pika did not understand until his wife said, "You're so stupid! We must have many children!" This explains why there are many pikas today.

Time passed. One day as Mother Mouse strolled along the emerald lake, she noticed a very tall tree. She rested under the tree, felt very comfortable, and slept until dusk when a breeze stroked her cheeks and awakened her.

The next day the mice family moved away from the pika couple and made a new home under the tall tree. They soon realized there was a great eagle's nest in the top of the tree. The eagle often bullied them and defecated on them.

Mother Mouse wisely did not argue with the great eagle. Instead when night came, she told her children to dig around the roots of the tree. Day after day passed and finally, the tree fell into the lake where all the great eagles drowned.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'od dkar	ସଦାକାର
gcig sgril	ଶତିଶାନ୍ତିରାମ
gu ru 'phrin las	ଶୁନ୍ୟପିତାରାମ
Guoluo	果洛
Jiuzhi	久治
Mentang	门堂
mgo log	ଶର୍ଵରାମ
mtsho sngon	ଷକ୍ତଶୂଳ
Qinghai	青海

A CLEVER BOY

Phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཕོན་ཚོགས་དབང་རྒྱལ

I was born in 1993 in Ska chung Village, Nyin mtha' Township, Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Reb gong (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I heard this story from my maternal grandmother (Mgon po mtsho, b. 1936), who I and my siblings and cousins call A ma che 'Big Mother'. She told me this story when I was about ten years old. When we had finished dinner, I and my siblings slept side by side near an adobe stove inside an enormous black yak-hair tent. I slept in Father's sheep-skin robe shared with my younger brother. We lay next to Grandmother on a wooden platform on the ground. My sisters, wrapped in their own robes, slept on carpets side by side. At that time, we could not easily go to sleep without Grandmother's stories.

Long ago, thick mountain forests surrounded a beautiful place. Nearby, colorful flowers blossomed on an infinite grassland as pure streams gushed in the valleys. Countless twittering birds provided nature's music.

A community led a very hard, difficult life amid this natural beauty. A boy who lived alone there was the poorest in this community. However, he was wise and honest so locals called him Clever.

The wealthy king was also called Clever. He was very selfish, only caring about his own benefit. When he heard that another man was also called Clever, he felt uncomfortable and commanded his servants to bring this other Clever to his palace.

When Poor Clever arrived, the king said, "Your name is Clever?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, the people of my community often call me Clever," the poor man said.

"I want to compete to see if you are cleverer than me. If you are, I promise this name will belong to you forever and I will also give you half of the jewels of my kingdom. If you lose, I will kill you," the king said arrogantly.

The poor man was very afraid and hesitated. He lacked the courage to challenge the king and could only agree with the king's command.

The king said, "This treasure around my neck is my life amulet. If you can steal it in three days, I will admit that you are truly clever, and I will give you what I promised. You only have three days."

The poor man returned home and pondered. Meanwhile, the king ordered his underlings to protect him. His mounted soldiers watched the gate of the palace, and some female servants stayed by the king all day and night. They were all very concerned about Poor Clever's plans.

The first night, they were all very cautious, but nothing happened. The second night all the king's guards were more careful than the first night, but the poor man did nothing.

Actually, Poor Clever intended to steal the king's treasure on the third night when the king's protectors were exhausted and unable to be vigilant.

On the third night, Poor Clever dressed as a woman bringing liquor to the king's palace. When the king's guards confronted him, he offered them some liquor and they were soon drunk. He then carried the guards to the top of the wall, where they slept drunkenly.

Next, Poor Clever went inside the king's castle, found the king's exhausted sleepy servants sitting back to back, and then carefully took the king's amulet from around his neck.

After this, he put a sheep's stomach very near the top of the king's head and then tied the now dozing female servants' hair

together. Once this was done, he ran out of the castle, screaming, "I stole it!"

The king woke up, discovered that his amulet was gone, and touched his head, which he felt had become very soft and bald because he was touching the sheep stomach. Nervously, he angrily yelled, "He stole the treasure from around my neck! Catch that poor man!"

The soldiers woke up from their drunken sleep. Still in a daze, however, they thought they were on their horses and flourished their whips. They then realized where they were when the castle walls they were astride did not move.

The female servants screeched and scolded each other, "Don't pull my hair!"

The next morning, Poor Clever visited the king and said, "Your Majesty, I won. Please keep your promise."

The king flew into a rage and commanded his soldiers to catch and kill the poor man.

When Poor Clever heard this, he threw the king's life amulet on the floor with all his might. It broke and thus the king died.

Poor Clever then became king, gave money and property to the poorest families, and they all then had happy, secure lives.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a ma che ང་མ་ཆେ

Henan 河南

Huangnan 黃南

mgon po mtsho །ମྔ རྩྋ མྚྱོ

mtsho sngon མྚྱྴ ཟྔ

nyin mtha' ཉିନ ມାତା

phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཞୁନ ཐସ୍ དଙ୍ଗ ର୍ଗ୍ୟାଲ

Qinghai 青海

reb gong རେ སୋ

rma lho ར୍ମା ར୍ଲୋ

ska chung ལ୍କା ཚੁଂ

A CLEVER MAN

Tshe lha བྲྱା

One day, a king asked one of his servants, "What is your name?"

"My honorable king, my name is Clever," the servant replied.

"What? My name is Clever. How is it possible that you could have the same name?" the king shouted in surprise.

The servant said, "My honorable king, there is no reason my name is Clever."

The king replied, "You can't be named Clever without a reason."

The servant asked, "Why should I have a reason for my name?"

"Fine, if you are really clever, let's see if you can steal this jewel from around my neck. If you can steal it from me in seven days, I'll allow you to keep your name and I'll also give you half of my property."

The jewel was the king's soul and he was safe only if the jewel was safe. If the jewel was broken, the king would die.

The king worked hard to protect himself. He ordered many of his servants, including women, to guard his house, both inside and outside. Then he sent his horsemen to guard his palace. Everyone waited for Clever to try and steal the jewel.

Six days passed and nothing happened. The guards were exhausted and sleepy. On the last day, Clever put on a woman's robe, carried a bucket of liquor, and walked to the palace. Nobody recognized him.

A horseman asked, "What are you doing here?"

Clever replied, "I'm coming here to offer you some liquor."

The horseman, "Have you seen Clever recently?"

Clever said, "No, I haven't seen him for a long time."

The horseman nodded and then said, "Okay, then we will have some liquor."

After some time passed, the horsemen and the other servants were all dead drunk on the ground. Clever tied the women servants' hair together, set the end of their hair on fire, put a stone in each of the servant's sleeves, went to the king's bedroom, and stole the jewel from where it hung around the king's neck.

The king soon woke up, discovered his jewel was gone, and shouted. This awakened the women servants. Realizing their hair was burning, they swatted at the fire with their sleeves. Not understanding that there were stones in their sleeves, they beat each other to death. The horsemen, who had drunk a great deal, remained unconscious.

The next day, Clever went to the king's palace and asked the king to keep his promise.

Instead, the king said, "You took my jewel, so I'm going to punish you."

Clever was very angry that the king would not keep his promise and broke the jewel. The king then died and Clever became the new king.

NON-ENGLISH TERM

tshe lha བྲା

THE GREEDY KING AND TRICKY MAN

Lcags so lhun 'grub བྱାଙ୍ଗ རྩୁଁ རྩୁଁ (Klu sgrub རྩୁଁ རྩୁଁ) (translator) and
Rgya mo skyid རྩୁଁ རྩୁଁ (teller)

Rgya mo skyid (b. 1992) of Mdo ba Town, Reb gong (Thun rin, Tongren) County, Rma Iho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China told me this story in an apartment in Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province on 21 August, 2016. She said, "When I was about five years old, my grandfather (Kun bzang, b. 1939) told me many stories such as this before we went to bed every night. I forgot many stories, but this story is still very clear."

There was once a greedy local king who collected taxes monthly. There was also a very poor man known as Tricky Tsag thul. The local king came to Tricky's home to punish him for not paying his taxes for several months.

When Tricky learned that that the king would soon arrive, he ran to his uncle's home, borrowed a piece of gold, returned home, and said to his wife, "While the king is eating here, I will ask you to check to see if our horse has defecated gold today. You will then bring this piece of gold and give it to me as the king is watching."

A bit later, the king arrived and scolded Tricky for not paying his taxes. Nevertheless, the king stayed for lunch.

Just before lunch, Tricky asked his wife to see if their horse had defecated gold. Tricky's wife went outside, soon returned, handed a piece of gold to her husband in front of the king, and said, 'What a small piece today!'

"My *bla ma!*!" the king murmured and sat stunned, drooling over the sight of the gold, but he soon recovered and regained his proud bearing. Then his greed won out and he asked, "How can a horse defecate gold?"

Lcags so lhun 'grub (translator) and Rgya mo skyid (tellers). The Greedy King and the Tricky Man. 2017. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:115-119.

Tricky replied, "My dear king! It's easy! Just give a generous amount of flour mixed with warm water to a horse and then it will defecate gold in pieces as big as a human head."

Once the king heard this, he rode off without asking for his taxes. Meanwhile, Tricky laughed and enjoyed lunch with his wife.

Some days later, Tricky saw the king in the distance, heading to their home. Tricky told his wife, "Pour some water into our big pot, boil it, and then drop three grains of rice into the pot after the king arrives. Serve a lot of tea to the king. He will then surely have to urinate. While he is outside, pour three bowls of rice into the pot and boil it."

The king soon arrived and Tricky ran outside to welcome him. The king planned to take Tricky to his palace and punish him because his horse had just died from diarrhea from overeating flour mixed with warm water as Tricky had suggested. The king solemnly sat on a felt carpet while Tricky's wife dropped three grains of rice into the pot and said, "My dear king! It won't take long. Please enjoy your tea first and then we'll have a nice meal with rice."

The king sniffed and thought, "Will I eat these three grains of rice? Is that all they plan to serve?" After several bowls of tea, the king shouted at Tricky to hand him his leather boots and then he went outside to urinate.

Meanwhile, Tricky's wife poured three bowls of cooked rice into the boiling water. The king returned. After a few minutes, Tricky's wife uncovered the pot startling the king who noticed the pot was full of rice. He was so stupefied that he dropped the bowl of tea he was holding, which fell onto the white felt. It now seemed that the king had urinated on the carpet.

The king nervously inquired, "How could a few grains of rice become this much?"

Tricky replied, "Your queen doesn't know this!"

The king's face became very red as Tricky's wife explained, "Oh, dear king! You can do what I did today. Just put three grains of rice into hot water and boil it for a long time."

The king then returned to his palace. The next day, he invited four monks to the palace to chant scriptures for his impending hunting journey. He then decided to cook two grains of rice per monk. Based on his experience at Tricky's home, he was sure that was more than adequate. The king's preparations perplexed the monks, but they said nothing.

After the eight grains of rice had boiled a long time, the king confidently removed the cover of his copper pot, revealing nothing but grey colored liquid. Feeling flashes of heat and cold at the same time, he rushed to his horse and galloped to Tricky's home, determined to kill the trickster couple.

When he reached Tricky's home, Tricky was just returning with a wonderful fox skin hanging from his right shoulder.

The king totally forgot his anger when he saw the beautiful fox skin and immediately demanded, "Tricky, how did you get such a good fox skin?

Tricky, answered, "It may be difficult for a king. I rode my horse and took a dog to the top of a mountain. Cold, wind, snow - many harsh experiences are there, but luckily my dog finally caught this fox."

The king impatiently demanded to borrow Tricky's horse and dog. Tricky agreed and suggested that the king keep the hunting dog on a leash, but release him when he strained at the leash, which meant it was eager to chase after game.

The next morning, the king took Tricky's horse and dog. After a long while, the king reached the highest mountain peak and waited for wild animals. The sun eventually began to set. Chilly wind struck his face and the dog and horse. It was unbearably cold. The dog missed its home and pulled at the leash in the king's hand. The king immediately released it and then stared at the dog's dancing tail till it disappeared. The dog, of course, ran home. Finally, the king was so cold he got on the horse and rode back to his palace.

The next morning, the king took some of his men to Tricky's home and took Tricky from his morning bed, locked Tricky in a

wooden case, and dropped it into a big river near the palace. He then happily concluded, "This man will not trouble me again."

The river carried the case to the shore of a small lake. Tricky then kicked at the cover of the case just as a half-blind Muslim man was passing by with his flock of sheep, leading a very good horse. The Muslim man noticed the sounds of Tricky kicking the case, came over, and pulled off the lid.

"Why were you locked in this case?" asked the Muslim man.

Tricky replied, "Before, I was blind, but a tantric specialist put me in this case by the lake. Now, it's amazing! I can see everything! Just everything."

The Muslim man then lay in the case as Tricky refastened the lid, and pushed it into the river. He then mounted the horse and drove the flock of sheep to his own home. A few days later, news of Tricky's new wealth reached the king's palace.

The king was shocked and amazed. He visited Tricky's home to learn how he had suddenly acquired so much property. Tricky said, "When I was in the case, it rolled on the surface of the river. I was dizzy, tired, and finally fell asleep. When I woke up from my incomplete dreams, I was standing on land, holding the reins of a horse with a big flock of sheep in front of me."

Inspired, the king ordered his servant to lock him in a case and drop him into the same river Tricky had nearly died in. The river seemed very hurried, smashing the case into stones with an unruly rhythm.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bla ma བ୍ଲା ମା

Huangnan 黄南

klu sgrub ཀ୍ଲୁ ଶ୍ରୁବ

kun bzang ཀୁନ ବ୍ଜାଙ୍

lcags so lhun grub ལୁଗ୍ ସୋ ଲୁହନ୍ ଗ୍ରୁବ

mdo ba ମ୍ଦୋ ବା

mtsho sngon ମତ୍ଶୋ ସଂଗ୍ନୋ

Qinghai 青海

reb gong ରେବ ଗଂ

rgya mo skyid ର୍ଗ୍ୟା ମୋ ଶିକ୍ଷିତ

rma lho ର୍ଗା ଲ୍ହୋ

Shaanxi 陕西

thun rin ଥୁନ୍ ରିନ୍

Tongren 同仁

tsag thul ତ୍ଶାଗ ଥୁଲ

Xi'an 西安

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RNAM RGYAL'S COLLECTION

INTRODUCTION

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱາլ

I, Rnam rgyal, was born in 1980 in Skor rol thang (Gu'ertong) Village, Dbra ltag (Reda) Township, Phyag phreng (Xiangcheng) County, Dkar mdzes (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China.

My stepfather, Bstan 'dzin (b. 1953), told me stories as a child. He was an orphan and grew up in difficult circumstances, as did many others during that time. His older sister, G.yang chen (b. 1946), was his main caregiver during his childhood. Later, he joined a production team that gave what they produced to the local government and received labor points in return. In addition, only limited food and poor quality articles for daily use were received.

He worked on a pastoral team and lived in tents and log cabins in the mountains and on the pastures. He often fought with other boys and became a tall, strong man. He and his herding companions told each other stories for entertainment at a time when there were no cassette recorders, televisions, and phones. Their stories included material from the Ge sar Epic, about A khu ston pa, about Mo ston phag mgo,¹ and so on. His stories included those



generally known by many Tibetans, and also stories particular to Dbra ltag dbra ltag.

After the production team system was discontinued, Stepfather moved to the village and told me stories when the sun sank behind the mountains in the west, and Mother lit the room with burning pine knots. His stories were terrifically interesting, launching my imagination up out of the valley and over the mountains, and connecting my soul to Heaven, Hell, and to distant forests and grasslands.

Dbra ltag in winter.



When villagers went up into the mountains to collect caterpillar fungus and mushrooms, they invited him to the biggest

¹ Mo ston pag mgo was a diviner who asked that a pig head be cooked as a reward when he divined correctly. Meanwhile, his wife encouraged him to ask for more compensation from those he helped.

tents and asked him to tell stories. He sat in the front of the tent and created great joy with his stories that spellbound his listeners. They cooked good food for him and admired him for his storytelling talent. The tents of these collectors were in very remote, wild valleys where the only modern tools were guns. Men hunted river deer, rabbits, pheasants, and black bears. Stepfather was also a good hunter and I admired him for that, too.

I began telling stories in primary school when I was about ten years old. When I was in fourth grade, my classmates asked me to tell stories in their small dormitory rooms that were crowded with listeners who offered me bread, walnuts, and dried cheese. I realized that storytelling was a useful social skill and asked Stepfather to tell me more stories.

When I was about thirteen I went on pilgrimage with villagers for a couple of days to Mount Gangs nyan. Along the way, I told stories to villagers who were all older than I was. A phyi sgrol ma said that this pilgrimage was the most relaxing and enjoyable one she had ever been on because of my stories.

I have not told stories for a long while and it is hard for me to remember some of the details that I once knew.

I thank Stepfather for raising me in the worlds of his marvelous stories.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a phyi sgrol ma ໃພີ້ສກ່ອມາ

bstan 'dzin ດັບຕິນ

dbra ltag, ra rtags ດຣາລຕາກ ຮຣາຕາກ

dkar mdzes ດໍາກະເຊີນ

g.yang chen ກຍັງເຄືນ

Ganzi 甘孜

ge sar ກະສາ

Gu'ertong 古尔通

mo ston phag mgo ມ້ອສັກພາກໂມງ

phyag phreng ພາຍັກົນ

Reda 热达

rnam rgyal ຮນາຮຽຍ

sbrang 'bu me nyug, me tog nyug ba ສັບມະນູງມະນູງ ເມຕົກມະນູງ

Sichuan 四川

skor rol thang ສກໂຮບທັງ

Xiangcheng 乡城

A HEN FOR A HORSE

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱາլ

Long ago in the southeastern part of Tibet on the banks of a very large, fast-flowing river, there was a village where local farmers gathered to trade field produce, goods such as meat and dairy products from pastoral areas, silver and gold items, livestock, and weapons. A young man and his father lived together in this village. The young man had a business selling eggs. He was very content with his business because he had been doing the same thing every day for many years and it had become quite successful.

One fine sunny day, as he returned home from the market with great satisfaction in his heart and a beautiful melody on his lips, his father, upon hearing his son's whistle, said, "My son, your whistling tells me you have done very well in business today."

"Father, for sure, and anyone who had exchanged a couple of eggs for a hen would be overjoyed, like me."

"You did well, my son. Your business is truly good, but let's see if we can do better tomorrow," the father said to the son.

Bright and early the next morning, the old man got up just as the sun's golden rays filled the town. He climbed carefully down from his sleeping area by ladder to the yard and, with his son as a witness, chose a hen from the perch and took it into town.

Once in town, he exchanged this hen for a couple of young chickens. Then, in a different part of town, he exchanged the young chickens for two bigger birds. And later, in the upper part of town, he exchanged them once more for chickens that were even bigger.

Towards the middle of the day he exchanged the two biggest chickens for a sheep and later still, gave away the sheep for a couple of younger sheep in the town center.

Just as the sun was going down behind the mountains to the west, the old man arrived at the far end of town, and exchanged his young sheep for a horse and set off homewards with deep satisfaction in his heart.

As he approached the yard, the son heard the neigh of a strong, healthy young horse in its prime.

"And whose horse is that, may I ask?" the son inquired.

"A few moments ago, it belonged to someone else, but now, my son, it's ours," the father answered.

"You mean you have exchanged the hen for this horse?" exclaimed the boy in disbelief.

"Yes, my son. This is the result of my trading for today, and how I managed it is very interesting indeed. I call it the 'hen for a horse trading method' and I hope you will learn from it for the future."

The boy was so struck with the wisdom of his aging father that, for the briefest of moments, there appeared in his eyes a tear of admiration and pride.

NON-ENGLISH TERM

rnam rgyal རྩାମ ༜ྡྙା

A HUNTER'S DESTINY

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱາլ

A hunter with a quiver full of arrows at the right side of his waist and a rainbow-like bow on his back was on his way to a deep, narrow valley that slowly opened to a jungle in which only a bold man would dare set foot. Big trees held their numerous arms around each other so tightly that only tiny rays of light could pass through the leaves to the rich ground. Wild animals enjoyed this jungle as their home and peacefully lived there.

The hunter went there one day, full of hope to find and kill many animals. Unluckily, he had killed nothing when dark night fell and he had to spend the night under a big fir tree. He thought it was shameful to go back home without any game. He made butter tea, had some bread, and then chanted to the mountain deities, beseeching them to help him and expressing his veneration.

He slept under the starry sky and dreamed of a big tree which told him that he would find nothing while hunting and that he must leave the jungle he was in and go to the first village. There, the big tree said, he would find a family with a newborn girl who would become his wife - a wife who would be killed by a pig when she turned forty.

He woke up from this strange dream to find birds singing and squirrels jumping here and there nearby. He had his breakfast and left with his weapon for a new day of hunting. Again, he hunted unsuccessfully. Recalling his strange dream, he felt compelled to go to the village he had dreamed of and then asked at a home in the village if he could stay the night. Receiving permission, he entered the courtyard of the home, and heard a newborn baby crying and the infant's mother singing a lovely lullaby. Suddenly recalling what the

tree had said in his dream, he wondered again how a twenty-year-old man could marry an infant.

That night, he thought repeatedly of his dream and the newborn baby. He thought, "How unlucky for a baby to be an old man's wife and be killed by a pig when she is only forty!"

The next morning, a cruel intention grew in his heart: it was best to kill the baby before she had to marry an old man and be killed by a pig, as the tree had foretold. He decided it would be better if he killed her so she could be reborn and enjoy a normal life. He got up, took his spear, and resolved to stab the baby girl, but he could not because the baby looked so innocent and vulnerable. Finally, he pointed the spear at the baby's head, stabbed without looking, and then fled.

Twenty years passed, and he was again hunting in the same area when he encountered a beautiful young woman carrying firewood on her back. He also noticed that she had a scar on her forehead. The man stopped and curiously asked, "Which village are you from?"

"The first village," the young woman answered.

"Why do you have a scar on your forehead?" the man inquired.

"My mother told me that a hunter hurt me just after I had been born," she replied.

The man then recalled all the events of twenty years before. He then became very talkative and the young woman asked him to come to her home for tea.

He accepted and, after more conversation, he asked her to marry him and she agreed.

They lived happily for another twenty years. When the man realized that his wife would soon be forty, he ordered her to stay in their house for a year to avoid encountering any pigs. Both husband and wife, however, had forgotten that they kept large pieces of pork tied to beams above the stove, as was the local custom. Smoke from the stove helped cure and dry the pork. Once preserved, the pork could be eaten years after it had been hung up this way.

As the wife was cooking at the stove and thinking about going outside the next day, she did not realize that a pig head was hanging from a beam above the stove. A spark from the stove flew up and burned the string suspending the pig head, which then fell and struck the back of the young woman's neck.

When her husband returned home, he found her dead.

This is the origin of the saying "You can't escape destiny by hiding in your mother's apron."

NON-ENGLISH TERM

rnam rgyal རྩାମ ར୍ୟାଲ

A LUCKY MAN

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱལ

A very diligent woman famous for her quick wit and caring ways lived a long time ago in a sleepy village high in the mountains rich in pine, fir, and spruce trees, and many types of wildlife. Her husband, Me nyug gser tog, was quite different. He sought neither wealth nor fame. He preferred to do nothing more than laze about at home in the sun. Late one afternoon, the diligent wife made her way home from the fields with her basket full of grass for the livestock and found her husband lounging half-asleep in the corner as usual. She was downhearted at this pathetic sight and wondered once again what she could do to make him more ambitious. She yearned for a useful and energetic man about the house. She often spent the whole night turning this matter over in her mind.

Early the next morning, just as the sun was creeping over the mountain peaks to the east, the wife from her kitchen window, spied a band of merchants packing up their campsite and loading their wares onto horses while the sun's rays gently warmed their backs. Just then, she hatched a crafty plan. Unseen by anyone, she took an unopened pack of leaf tea down from the shelf, and scuttled off to the campsite, placing the tea on the exact spot where the merchants had slept. Then she quickly snuck home to wake her husband.

"Why wake me so early?" the husband demanded.

"Come see! There are hundreds of crows hovering around the campsite. Those merchants must have left something," she explained.

"It's unlikely to be anything valuable," her husband said.

"Maybe not, but you know the saying: a man is like an eagle - he should be out exploring the world, not sitting at home all day doing nothing. Why not go have a look?"

So, to please his wife, the husband got himself up from bed and ran straight to the campsite to see what he could see. To his great

surprise, there on the ground before him, on the exact spot his wife had said, lay a large pack of tea which, without a moment's hesitation, he picked up and brought home.

Very pleased with his good fortune, he said, "My dear, you were right! There was something there after all."

"Oh, dear husband, just as I said; a man is like an eagle - he should be out exploring the world, not sitting at home all day doing nothing. I am so happy you proved me right!"

"Well, if it makes you that happy, I will go exploring every day!"

"Husband, you could make a fortune if you but tried a little bit harder," his wife persuaded. And from that very moment on, Me nyug gser tog went out every day to explore the world and see what he could see.

One day he surreptitiously filched a sturdy cobbler's needle and noticed, by chance, a small jeweled ornament dangling precariously from a pilgrim's saddle. He was sure the ornament would work its way loose if he only waited long enough. Tagging along with the pilgrims, he eventually came to a village he did not know. The leader of the pilgrims unfastened the flute from his waist and blew a message outside the house of a wealthy local family to signal they pilgrims and begging for food.

At that very moment the youngest daughter was milking a yak and, alarmed by the sudden and unfamiliar sound of the flute, the yak jumped up nervously, kicking the young girl. The precious jade bracelet around her wrist broke, flew up into the air and, unseen by others, landed in some fresh dung near where Me nyug gser tog was standing. Quick as a flash, he scooped up the bracelet, pressed it into fresh dung, and stuck it to a wall where many other dung patties to be used for fuel were drying in the sun.

Meanwhile, the whole family rushed around searching for the bracelet. Several hours later there was still no sign of the jade bracelet.

"If you like, I could do a divining ritual to find the bracelet," Me nyug gser tog offered.

"What kind of divining ritual can find jade?" asked the head of the family.

"The famous pig head divining ritual, of course," Me nyug gser tog replied.

"How is it done?" the family head asked.

"Well, if you cook me a delicious pig head, I will show you."

And so the best pig was slaughtered and the head was prepared for Me nyug gser tog. He was shown to the best carpet in the house and sat there in splendor with butter tea, cheese, sugar crystals, and yak beef laid out on the table before him. Very soon the pig head was ready and, smelling heavenly, it was delivered ceremoniously to the table. With the utmost respect, it was placed before him. The family sat in a circle and watched him relish his favorite food.

"Now, let the divining ritual commence," said Me nyug gser tog standing up.

Taking a stick in his right hand, he made his way out to the yard, with everybody following behind. Rhythmically, he pointed the stick to the left and to the right, chanting at the same time while performing strange little dance steps, and periodically murmuring, "Here or there? Here or there?"

Wherever he pointed, all eyes gazed. He searched the yard for several minutes, dancing slowly towards the part of the wall where he had hidden the bracelet. Then, with an expression of seemingly utter amazement on his face and a great flourish of his arm, he pointed the stick at the dung patty on the wall and announced grandly, "There! It's there!"

Hesitantly, the father of the family approached the wall, picked off the designated dung patty, and rubbed his fingers into the dung. When the bracelet appeared, everyone jumped up and down in joy, proclaiming, "What a diviner! Never in our lives have we seen anything like this!"

Me nyug gser tog returned home with generous gifts, delighting his wife. "You see, a man is like an eagle - he should be out

exploring the world, not sitting at home all day doing nothing," she said, but secretly worried about what he might do next if somebody else needed help. She then suggested he stay at home for some time.

Me nyug gser tog was soon famous as the story of the pig head divining ritual was repeated wherever locals went. A few days later, a family lost a horse-head figurine made from solid gold. The family's maid, Snga las 'Destiny', came to beg Me nyug gser tog to perform a divination. And in the meantime, at home, the other maid, Tshe las, prepared a pig head as the family hopefully waited.

The diviner and the maid rode together on horseback. Me nyug gser tog said nothing for some time, which prompted the maid to ask, "Where will the horse-head be found, distinguished Diviner?"

Me nyug gser tog turned sharply to the maid and confidently said, "Destiny. It was an act of Destiny."

No sooner were his words out than the maid leapt from the horse, knelt, and confessed, "Pig Head Diviner, it was not only me. I had an accomplice. The maid, Tshe las, and I stole the gold figurine together."

"Tell me where have you hidden it," Me nyug gser tog said.

"We put it in the wall of a field," Destiny answered.

"I'll say nothing of your terrible deed if you hide it under the doorstep tonight," Me nyug gser tog

Snga las agreed and thanked Me nyug gser tog for keeping her secret.

The next morning, Me nyug gser tog savored the pig head and then went to the yard where the family was waiting with great interest. As before, he held a stick and pointed to the left and then to the right, murmuring, "Here or there? Here or there?" his every step taking him towards the door. Suddenly, the stick seemed to be pointing at the door and he proclaimed, "It is right here, under the doorstep."

Everybody held their breath while the doorstep was dug up. "It is true!" yelled someone. The gold horse was then held up high for everybody to see.

Me nyug gser tog again returned home laden with gifts, which made his wife even prouder of him. "A man is like an eagle - he should be out exploring the world, not sitting at home all day doing nothing," she again pronounced.

Now with enough wealth to last a lifetime, they agreed that Me nyug gser tog would do no more divining rituals.

However, the king learned of the great diviner's feats, summoned him to his castle, and said, "I have heard of your great success as a diviner. I will now conceal an object in my closed fist and you will guess what it is. If you are as clever as people say and guess correctly, I will reward you with thousands of gold coins. But if you are lying and are wrong, you will lose your head. Now is your chance to prove yourself."

Those in the palace settled down to watch. The king, unseen by anyone, trapped a *sbrang 'bu me nyug* 'tiny fly' in the cup of his hands, held his closed fist out to Me nyug gser tog, and asked, "What is in my fist?"

Me nyug gser tog silently fell to his knees before the throne.

"What is in the king's hands?" hissed one of the ministers.

Me nyug gser tog shook his head and fell flat on the ground gasping for breath as all eyes gazed at him.

"What is in the king's hands?" insisted the minister.

"Me nyug will surely die," whimpered Me nyug gser tog.

In astonishment, the king stood up from his throne and, in full view of the assembled courtiers, raised his arms and slowly opened the palms of his hands to let the tiny *me nyuq* fly escape.

"He is right. See! What I had in my hands was a tiny a golden
me nyua fly! There it goes!"

Me nyug gser tog, much praised by the people, returned home with a large chest full of gold. When his wife saw these riches, she said, "Skyes pa bya rgod nyal na mi dga' 'gro na dga' ཤྔྱସ སྔྱྱ རྒୋ ད୍ଗା' ཉྱྱ རྒୋ ད୍ଗା' A man is like an eagle - he should be out exploring the world, not sitting at home doing nothing."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

me nyug gser tog མྚྱུག་ගླྙྰ ཉྰྫྰ

me nyug མྚྱྰ

rnam rgyal རྩାମྰ୍ଗྱାଲ

skyes pa bya rgod nyal na mi dga' 'gro na dga གྱྲྰୁ བྱା རྒୋ ན ན ན ན ན

ྱྰྰୀ

snga las གྱାଲྰ

AN ARGUMENT ABOUT KARMA

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱལ

Long ago, there was a remote place where people had barbarously struggled for a better life with their courage and physical strength. When the idea of "karma" was first spread by an itinerant guru, locals often discussed this new concept.

One day, a kind man on a journey met a brute of man who disbelieved in karma. The kind man took out a teapot, made tea for lunch, and invited the brute to have tea with him. The brute went over, drank all the tea by himself, and then watched the kind man with sharp, deep eyes.

"It's our karma to share tea together," said the kind man.

"There is no such thing as karma. Don't mention something I will never believe in. Show me where karma is and what karma looks like. Is it white or red? Is it the size of a chicken or a yak?" said the brute.

"I cannot show you karma, but a guru can," said the kind man.

"We will find and ask the guru. If he cannot show me karma, I will gouge out your eyes. If he can, then you gouge out my eyes," said the brute.

The kind man led the brute to where the guru was meditating. "Did you say that there is karma?" asked the brute.

"Yes, karma is everywhere," replied the guru.

"Fine. Show me karma or I will kill you," said the brute, took out his knife, and put its sharp, shiny blade on the guru's shoulder.

"No, there is no karma," said the guru.

"I told you karma does not exist," said the brute, pointed the sharp knife at the kind man, and gouged out his eyes.

The brute then proudly left the guru and the blind man and told everybody he met that karma did not exist.

The blind man crept on his hands and knees like a dog until he came to a door of a deserted house. He silently crept inside and slept in a corner.

Late at night, some wild animals came into the room where he had crept. "The beautiful girl in this village is mad. She has one hair that is red, one that is white, and one that is yellow. If these three hair were removed, she would recover, but nobody knows this," said a lion.

"The grassland near the village has a big stone. If that stone was moved, a spring would flow. If the land that surrounds it was plowed, it would be fertile fields," said a leopard.

"There are two eyes under the peach tree and if a blind man could find them, he could use them to replace his own," said a bear.

The blind man stayed very still. When the animals left, he crept outside and asked the first person he bumped into to take him to the mad girl in the village. When he was brought to her home, he told her father to remove the three hair that he had heard described.

The father did so and the girl immediately recovered. The whole village was moved and encouraged the girl to marry the blind man.

She agreed and the new couple soon found the two eyes under the peach tree. When he put these eyes in his empty sockets, his vision was better than anyone in the village.

Finally, they went to the nearby grassland, removed the stone, and began to cultivate the land, which proved very productive, thanks to irrigation water from the spring.

More days passed and the kind man happened to meet the brute. They stared at each other for a moment and then the brute asked, "How did you get your eyes back?"

After the kind man told all that happened, the brute asked him to gouge out his eyes so he too, could have a good life. The kind man refused so the brute gouged out his own eyes. In great pain, he began crawling. He also came to a deserted building, crept inside, and felt his way to a corner.

Later at night, the same animals came and discussed was how the local people had discovered their secrets. Suspecting someone was eavesdropping, the animals searched the room, discovered the brute, and killed and ate him.

When the guru learned this, he said, "*Rgyu 'bras med pa min smin dus ma tshang ba red* རྒྱུ་འབྲས་མྚଦ་པ་ୟିନ୍ བྲୈକྰ୍ମ୍ୟାହକ୍ଷମାତ୍ର|| When the time comes, karma ripens."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

rgyu 'bras med pa min smin dus ma tshang ba red རྒྱུ་འବྲସାମ୍ଚଦ୍ୟାପ୍ୟିନ୍ བྲୈକྰ୍ମ୍ୟାହକ୍ଷମାତ୍ର||
rnam rgyal རନ୍ମାର୍ଗ୍ୟାଲ

A ROYAL GAMBLE

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱལ

Once upon a very sunny time, there was a small kingdom with a lush grassland that produced livestock and horses that were much sought after.

In this kingdom, there lived a herdsman, famous for his honesty and for never having lied. The king trusted this herdsman completely.

The herdsman tended the king's horses and paid special attention to Rta khra shel gyi nyi ma, which was the king's favorite horse. It had the most attractive gait, was the fleetest of foot, and had a mane as shiny as a looking glass that sparkled in the sunlight. The people called the horse Looking Glass and believed it knew what people were thinking and that it had helped the king win his many wars and make wise decisions at court.

A neighboring king came to visit the small kingdom one day and the two kings talked about many things, including their herdsmen and livestock. When the conversation moved on to human nature and honesty, the visiting king said, "There isn't a man alive in this world who does not lie when he has to."

"I disagree," said the host. "There is one man living here who has never in his life had the need to tell a lie."

"I don't believe it. There can be nobody alive who has never told a lie. And if there were such a person, who would it be?" said the visitor.

"Why, my herdsman, of course," said the host king in all honesty.

"Well, I cannot believe it, but if you think he does not lie, let's have a wager and put him to the test."

Both kings agreed and promised not to speak about their wager. If the herdsman lied, his king would give away one of his provinces, and if he did not lie, he would win a province from the visiting king.

The neighboring king then sent one of his best maids to the small kingdom to try and become intimate with the herdsman. As time went by they fell in love. One night, the maid got sick and the herdsman looked after her with love and compassion.

"Can I do anything for you?" asked the herdsman.

"Bring me some soup made of the heart of Looking Glass, and my problems will be over. Without it I will die," said the maid.

The herdsman pondered, sitting awake the whole night. Realizing finally that he had no choice, he killed the horse, and then made a soup and gave it to his lover.

"Oh, my dear, I am already getting better after drinking this soup, but the king will be very angry and may kill you when he finds out what you have done to his favorite horse," the herdsman's wife said.

"I had no choice, and I have to face what lies ahead," the herdsman said.

"Say the horse died suddenly of a disease. Maybe that will work," the herdsman's wife suggested.

After a couple of days, the herdsman began his journey to the palace feeling deeply conflicted. As he got near the castle, he stopped at a stone cairn and said, "I will say an illness killed the horse."

As soon as he said this, the cairn stones crumbled.

"No. I will not lie. It is a sign, I must tell the king the truth about the horse's death," he decided and the cairn reformed and stood complete.

It is a sign!" thought the herdsman.

When he reached the palace, he respectfully presented a white scarf to the king who was sitting on his throne next to the neighboring king, who was visiting once again. All the people in the palace were watching the herdsman intently.

"My distinguished king, forgive me, for I have done a terrible thing. I killed your precious horse, Looking Glass, to make a soup that would cure my wife's illness," the herdsman announced.

The two kings sat dumbstruck for a moment until the herdsman's king laughed and proudly said to the neighboring king, "You see, I told you there is someone who never lies. My herdsman has just proven it."

The neighboring king was annoyed at losing the wager, but he was also moved by the herdsman's honesty, and willingly gave up one of his provinces to the king who had won the wager.

The king of the small kingdom rose and said, "There are honest people who tell no lies in the world, and my herdsman is one of them. To reward his honesty, he will be the head of my new province."

Everybody in the palace congratulated the herdsman.

The king then added, "A father's best achievement is the effort made by his son - they share success together. A bow's success in killing a deer is its arrow's contribution - the kill belongs to both."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

rnam rgyal རྩାମ ༃ର୍ଗ୍ୟାଲ
rta khra shel gyi nyi ma རྲ୍ତା ଖ୍ରା ଶେଲ ଗ୍ୟି ନ୍ୟି ମା

THE MERCHANT

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱལ

A long time ago, a distinguished merchant, Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po and 1,500 of his companions, were on their way to their home in the Land of Snows. As they passed a wilderness of infertile hills and desert stretching far into the horizon.

Yaks and horses struggled as the sun burnt their skins, and their feet sank deep into the sand, making every step increasingly difficult. Only the camels looked comfortable and kept moving forward easily.

Suddenly, a windstorm blew in from the west, covering the sky with low-hanging dark clouds. "Be careful! A black, evil wind is coming!" shouted Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po.

His words were the last ones they heard, as everyone was swept up by the wind and thrown into another world, the West Siren Region. When they woke from deep unconsciousness, they saw that they were surrounded by sirens who looked strikingly beautiful, sexy, and strong, but also demon-like. They laughed, shouted, and danced. Soon, all the merchants had a woman of their own. They were excited at first, but soon tired of fulfilling the sirens' insatiable desire.

Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po and his fellows were exhausted from working hard all day and entertaining the women all night.

One day, Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po heard moaning from a corner of a building and crept closer to investigate. Women with sharp, long tongues were licking an old man who was bleeding, as the excited women lapped up his blood. After the sirens left, Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po crept near the old man and asked, "What happened? Where are you from?"

"I was brought here by the storm. This place is the origin of evil. These women have no love, only desire. When you get old, they will suck your blood," the old man said.

Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po left the old man and prayed to Guru Pad ma 'byung gnas. That night he dreamed of an old woman who told him, "The day after tomorrow a huge white horse will roll on the sand near the river. You and the other men must pray to your great *bla ma*, rush to the horse without doubt, ride, hold on to its hair, touch the horse, or at the very least, have faith that the horse will take you back to your own land. You mustn't look back at this evil land or you will be abandoned by the holy horse."

An evil woman woke Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po early the next morning and told him to do his usual work - taking care of babies that were the offspring of the sirens and the captive men. When Tshong dpon nor bu bzang po was able, he secretly told his fellows about the old man and his dream. When he dreamt the same dream the next night, he told his fellows they must pray to Guru Pad ma 'byung gnas as instructed in the dream.

The next morning, all the men went to work and constantly watched the riverbank, hoping to see the white horse. Suddenly, the large horse was rolling on the sand. Praying, they all rushed to the horse. Though all the men were unable to ride or touch the horse, they all prayed and put their trust in the horse consequently, they were all taken away from the evil world that had been their prison.

However, one man forgot the warning and looked back. He saw the evil women killing the babies and shouting, "We will kill all the babies if you don't return!" Then the man began to fall. He landed on sand and was not badly hurt, but he soon became hungry and could find nothing to eat.

After walking a long time, he encountered a big frog. The man caught the frog, but he had no fire and did not want to eat it raw, so he put it in a stone hole and waited. Soon, he heard many horses neighing and other, strange creatures coming out of the sea. The sea creatures approached him and asked, "Have you seen our sea princess? If you find her, we will give you whatever you ask for."

"Do you have fire? I need to cook a big frog," the man said, taking the frog out of the stone.

"That is our princess!" exclaimed the sea creatures, bowing to the big frog. The sea creatures then urged the man to visit their kingdom, "Sir, if you stay in our kingdom for three years, we will treat you very well."

"No, thank you, I only wish to return to my own land," the man said.

"Then stay for three months, and we will give you whatever you like," the creatures said.

Finally, the man agreed to come for one day. As soon as he shut his eyes, he was taken to the Sea Kingdom. Musicians made beautiful music, and the king and his subjects welcomed him. He was intoxicated by the marvelous scenery, the delicious seafood, the beautiful sea maids, and precious sea treasures.

Three years passed before he remembered his desire to leave the sea kingdom. When the king offered him a parting gift, the man visited a famous wise man and asked him what he should take from the king.

The wise man told to take him to take a piece of black tent cloth near the stove, a piece of yak horn below the ladder, and a flowery hen in the chicken coop.

The king agreed and the man was immediately returned to his own land with the three gifts. He walked all day toward his village until he fell asleep under his black tent cloth.

The next morning, he found he was under a very large tent. He could not find his yak horn, but when he gazed through the tent door, he saw hundreds of sheep and yaks on the grassland.

Leaving the flowery hen in the tent, he went out and herded his livestock. At noon, when he returned to the tent, he found cooked food. Day after day, he herded animals and found very good cooked food in the tent.

One morning, he left as usual, but then hid near the tent and watched. He saw the flowery hen become bigger and then a beautiful girl took off the hen's feathers and began preparing food.

The man rushed inside the tent, grabbed the feathers, and threw them into the stove.

"It's too early to burn them," said the beauty.

The man lived happily with his beautiful wife and until the king heard about the beauty and came to see her. Lust grew in the king's heart and finally, he called the man to the palace, and said, "We will compete for the beauty. Each of us must throw one plate of seeds on the floor and the one who can pick them all up first will be the winner. The beauty will be his," the king said.

When the man returned home and told his wife, she said, "I told you that it was too early to burn my feathers. Now you must go to the sea kingdom and ask my family for a magic box."

The man did what his wife advised and then took the magic box to the palace. When the king ordered the wager to begin, a group of people started quickly picking up the king's seeds.

When the man opened his box, a thousand hens flew out and picked up his seeds in just a few moments. The king thus lost the wager but, refusing to accept defeat, said, "There are two small hills covered with trees near here. Each of us must cut all the wood from the foot of the hill to the top. The one who finishes first is the winner."

When the man came back home and asked his wife what he should do, she said, "Now, you must borrow the magic box of axes from my family."

The man went to the sea bank and called to his wife's family, asking for the box of axes. When the box appeared, the man took it to the foot of one hill as the king instructed. As soon as the man opened the box, 100,000 men with axes appeared and asked what they should cut.

The man nervously said, "Cut the trees and the king."

In just an instant, the ax men cut all the wood and the king into pieces. The man thus won the wager and kept his wife. There was no more trouble until one day, when they were working together in

the tent, the man began pestering his wife to invite her father for dinner.

"You should not invite my father, but you may invite my mother," said his wife. "It is very inconvenient to invite my father and it is also dangerous for you. If you invite my mother, she only needs a piece of small wool carpet for a seat and a small pot of butter tea for dinner. But if you insist on inviting my father, you must prepare a giant vat of fresh milk."

The man filled a very big vat full of milk and hid in the dark quietly as his wife had instructed. Soon, a giant serpent broke through the surface of the sea with such force that this single leap carried the giant sea creature through the village and to the home of his daughter and son-in-law. The serpent made three circles around the house and stuck its head in through a window, where it immediately stretched out its long, tongue and lapped up all the milk.

The man could not control himself and said, "My father-in-law is extremely powerful and handsome."

The serpent raised its head and opened his mouth, ready to swallow the man.

"Please, Father, he is my husband. Forgive him," said his wife. Then, the serpent withdrew its head, went back to the sea, and never returned.

After several months, the stubborn man said, "You can use your magic and be more beautiful."

"I already am the most beautiful woman in the world," his wife replied.

"I want you to become even more beautiful," he insisted.

The next morning, the woman sadly went into the courtyard, sympathetically gazed at the man, and then turned into a beautiful yellow snake, slithered into the sea, and never returned.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bla ma བ୍ଲା ମା

gu ru pad ma 'byung gnas ཇྗ ຮྡ ພ ດ ບ ຢ ຑ ກ ນ ຄ
rnam rgyal ཁ ອ ສ ຖ ຍ ລ
tshong dpon nor bu bzang po ຕ ດ ດ ຊ ຕ ດ ດ ດ

THE PROVOCATIVE RABBIT

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱལ

A retreatant finished chanting for a family, packed up the offerings from the host, and started back to his hermitage feeling satisfied. A rabbit, called Ja dkrug mgo 'Trouble Maker', watched the retreatant through an evergreen bush, and decided he wanted to cheat the retreatant out of his offerings. Trouble Maker came out of the bush and stood in front of the retreatant in the middle of the path. As the retreatant came closer, Trouble Maker ran forward a few steps and then again turned back to watch the retreatant, who chased the rabbit for a while, but the heavy bag burdened him and he soon got very tired. He finally threw down his bag and chased Trouble Maker, who ran just beyond the retreatant's grasp. Finally, having left the retreatant far behind, Trouble Maker doubled back, picked up the retreatant's bag, and carried it off.

The rabbit took a jar of honey from the bag and scooped out some honey with his paws. Soon, a bear approached and said, "What's that you are eating?"

"I'm eating my eye. You know, eyes will grow back after a few days," the rabbit said, closing its left eye.

"Really? What does your eye taste like?" asked the bear.

"Very sweet," said the rabbit.

The bear came up to the rabbit with much curiosity. The rabbit took out a bit of honey, put it in the bear's mouth, and asked how the eye tasted.

"It is really tasty! Could you dig out my left eye? I would like to eat it," said the bear.

"Sure, bear's eyes are sweeter than rabbit eyes," said the rabbit and gouged out the bear's left eye. The bear's eye was bleeding and

the bear was in great pain, but the rabbit put a dollop of honey into the bear's mouth, and asked, "How does your left eye taste?"

"It is painful, but very sweet and delicious," said the bear.

"OK, bye. I must leave. Your eye will recover in a few days," said the rabbit.

"Wait! I would like to eat my right eye too, but I am worried nobody will be here to lead me around before my eyes recover," the bear said.

"I am a helpful rabbit and I will be your eyes," the rabbit offered.

"Then please dig out my right eye," the bear said.

The rabbit took out the bear's right eye, put it in the bear's mouth, asked, "How does your right eye taste?"

"It's not very sweet," said the bear.

The rabbit led the bear. On level grassland, the rabbit told the bear that he had to be very careful because they were on a stony road, so the bear fearfully followed the rabbit. When they were on a rocky road, the rabbit told the bear that they were on a level road, so the bear walked quicker and more freely. As a result, the bear often tumbled and injured himself.

The sky was darkening so the rabbit and the bear stayed in a cave at the top of a high cliff.

"Do you want to sleep in the inner or outside part of the cave?" asked the rabbit.

"The inner part," replied the bear.

The rabbit helped the bear to the inner part of the cave, made a big fire at the entrance of the cave, hoping that it would burn and suffocate the bear.

"Do you want to stay in the inner part of the cave or go outside?" asked the rabbit.

"Outside," said the bear.

The rabbit helped the bear to the edge of the cave and moved the fire near the bear. The bear was unable to bear the heat and fell down the cliff.

"Help, help!" cried the bear, where it was hanging to some brush.

"Raise both of your hands! I can't see you!" yelled the rabbit
The bear raised its paws and fell further down the rocky face, but managed to grip a bush with its teeth.

"Yell! I don't know where you are!" shouted the rabbit.

The bear roared, fell into the deep valley, and died.

The rabbit joyfully ran to a nearby shepherd and said, "A big bear has died in the valley. Why don't you go get it?"

"I have no person to watch my lambs," said the man.

"When wolves come, I'll shout to the sheep, 'Go back to the yard,' and cry 'Ki hi hi!' to the wolves. Then I'll drive the sheep into the yard," said the rabbit.

The man trusted the rabbit and went for the bear. At once, the rabbit went to a den of wolves and said, "The shepherd has left to get a bear. Why don't you go kill his sheep?"

"Well, I'd like to, but then no one would protect my newborn cubs from the crow," said the mother wolf.

"I will. I'll whistle at the crows and point my ears at them," assured the rabbit.

The wolf then left for the sheep. The rabbit immediately went to the crow and said, "The wolf has gone for the sheep. Why don't you go take the wolf cubs?"

"I'd like to, but I must look after my eggs," the crow said.

"I'll cover them with my smooth hair when the wind comes and protect them from hunters," the rabbit promised.

The crow believed the rabbit and left. Meanwhile, the rabbit broke all the eggs and ran on its way.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ja dkrug mgo བྱା རୁଗ ། མୋ
ki hi hi ຂີ ຂີ ຂີ
rnam rgyal ຮ୍ନାମ ຮ୍ଗୟାଲ

A WISE FATHER AND HIS FOOLISH SON

Rnam rgyal རྩམ་རྒྱལ

Everybody respected Pha skyong rgan a bo for his wisdom and he was often asked for advice. Many believed that he had come to this world specially to help people with Buddha's teachings. However, as if to balance his great store of wisdom, he had a foolish son who was the cause of many problems among the villagers.

The father, however, never gave up on his son and often gave him suggestions and advice.

One day, Pha skyong rgan a bo heard that a deer had drowned in a flood in an area between two villages. Pha skyong rgan a bo called his son and said, "Go and solve this problem. Two villages are close to fighting over a deer that has died on the common ground between the villages. The people need you to help negotiate who owns the deer."

"How am I to solve the problem?" asked the son.

"Go there and confidently cut the deer up into an upper part, a lower part, and a middle part. Say that the upper part belongs to the upper village, the lower part belongs to the lower part, and the middle part belongs to you for settling the conflict."

Blun gti rog was very glad to hear this advice and went directly to where the villagers were angrily arguing.

"You need not fight over a dead deer," said Blun gti rog.

The villagers turned to Blun gti rog in surprise. Someone in the group said, "What do you know about any of this?"

Blun gti rog introduced himself as the son of his well-known father. Everybody calmed down at once upon hearing the name of the great Pha skyong rgan a bo.

Blun gti rog took out his knife, cut the deer up into three parts, and said, "The upper part belongs to the upper village, the rear part

to the lower village, and the middle part belongs to me, the negotiator."

The villagers were satisfied with Blun gti rog's solution and praised him, saying a wise man must surely have a wise son. When Blun gti rog got home with the middle part of the deer, his father also praised him and added that a clever man should think carefully before attempting to handle a problem.

Exactly one year later, the corpse of a leper was found in the same place between the two villages and the people argued over who should remove and bury the corpse. When Blun gti rog heard about this he went to the village and asked, "Why are you arguing?"

"This corpse has floated from the upper part of the river so the upper villagers should take it away," said someone.

Blun gti rog immediately took out his knife and said, "I will cut the corpse into three parts. The upper part will belong to the upper village, the lower part will belong to the lower village, and the middle part will belong to me, the negotiator."

"If you'd rather, you can take the whole corpse. We don't really need it," someone said. Blun gti rog then went home with the entire corpse, disappointing his father.

Meanwhile, the villagers laughed and said, "A wise father and his foolish son."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

blun gti rog བློན་ග୍ତି·ରୋ

pha skyong rgan a bo དଫା·ଶ୍କ୍ୟଙ୍ଗ·ର୍ଗାନ·ା·ବୋ

rnam rgyal ར୍ନାମ·ର୍ଗ୍ୟାଲ

rta khra shel gyi nyi ma ར୍ତା·ଖ୍ରା·ଶେଲ·ଗ୍ୟି·ନ୍ୟି·ମା

A RIG RGAD PO

A RIG RGAD PO THREATENS THE BUDDHA WITH HIS WALKING STICK

Sangs rgyas bkra shis བංඛ རුජ བ්‍රාහ්මණ

I heard that A rig rgad po was from a place that has the name he is known by - A rig rgad po – which is near Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake). The people there are very traditional, very direct in their manner, and devoted Buddhists. They often go on pilgrimage to Lha sa. Stories about A rig rgar po describe their travels and encounters with Buddhas in Lha sa. I heard stories about A rig rgad po from my father's brother, Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho (b. ~1973), during the time I was a student at a school in Rwa rgya (2005-2011).

A rig rgad po was a very pious Buddhist. Every year he went on pilgrimage from A mdo to Lha sa by walking to visit various Buddhas. One time when he reached Lha sa, he prostrated as usual to a Buddha image, offered a small skin bag of *rtsam pa* and butter to the Buddha image, prayed, and then told the Buddha image that he was leaving.

He had his walking stick on his back and when he tried to pass through the temple door, the walking stick prevented him from leaving.

A rig rgad po thought the Buddha must be holding him back and said, "Don't hold me! I have to leave."

He tried again to pass through the door, but could not. He said, "Please let me go! Don't make me angry. My wife and children are waiting for me. They can't herd livestock without me."

He tried again to go through the door but he could not. He was then enraged, turned, took his walking stick, and moved to strike the Buddha. The Buddha then raised his right hand to protect his head.

"I told you not to make me angry, but you didn't listen. Now, how was that?" A rig rgad po said, gripped his walking stick, and then passed through the door.

We can still see this Buddha image in Lha sa with his hand raised.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a mdo ໃມດ້

a rig rgad po ໃຮີກໍາດ່າດ້

lha sa ລ້າສ້າ

mkhyen rab rgya mtsho ມະຂຽນຮັບຮ່າງມຕ්‍ඨො

mtsho sngon po ມຕ්‍ඨොສංගඩ

rtsam pa ຮຕ්සຳ

rwa rgya ຮວ່າຮ່າງ

sangs rgyas bkra shis ສංກ්‍රාන්ත්‍ය ບ්‍රාහ්මණ

A RIG RGAD PO VISITS LHA SA

Pad ma skyid དཔལ་ཤྱିດ

My name is Pad ma skyid. I was born in 1981 in Pan yag Community, 'Bo spa Township, Pad ma County, Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. I have eight siblings. Growing up in a black yak-hair tent, we spent our days playing with lambs, foals, and calves. We told all sorts of stories when everyone was in bed - stories about King Ge sar, ghosts, marriages, and tricksters. It was a time for my whole family to relax and share. I heard many A rig rgad po stories from my parents, siblings, and guests. A rig rgad po became part of my childhood. These stories bring back many beautiful memories.

Long ago, everyone thought thought Arig was stupid. Once he set off with a group on pilgrimage to Lha sa. On the way, he went to a woman's home and asked for food. When she kindly offered a bowl of cooked rice, A rig rgad po felt offended and got angry.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"No matter how stupid I am, I will not eat ant larvae," he said.

Realizing A rig rgad po didn't like rice, she kindly asked, "Oh, A rig rgad po, what kind of food do you want?"

"All I want is *rtsam pa* with cheese and butter," said A rig rgad po.

The kind woman then gave *rtsam pa* to A rig rgad po and rice to his companions.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'bo spa དୋ ས୍ପା
a rig rgad po ངྨ རିଗ རାଗ དୋ
ge sar གେ ནର
lha sa ལ୍ହା ཟା
mgo log ཡାଙ୍ଗ ཅଲୋ
mtsho sngon མକ୍ଷଣ མୋଣ
pad ma དମ୍ବ མା
pad ma skyid དମ୍ବ མା ཤ୍ୱିଦ
pan yag དମ୍ବ མା
Qinghai 青海
rtsam pa རୋତୁ

STUCK IN A WINDOW

Pad ma skyid དཔ་མ་སྐྱିດ

One late afternoon, A rig rgad po reached the Jo khang Temple in Lhasa but, finding the temple door locked, he stuck his head through a small window to see the Jo bo image. After gazing at it for some time, he found he couldn't pull his head out, no matter how hard he pulled.

A wise man in his group asked, "A rig rgad po, what are you doing?"

"I can't get my head back out of this window," answered A rig rgad po.

"Hm, I see. How did you get your head into the window?" asked the wise man.

A rig rgad po turned his head, pulled it out of the window, saying, "I got my head into the window like this."

"Wow! I got my head out of the window!" A rig rgad po exclaimed happily and went on to circumambulate the Jo khang.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a rig rgad po ངྚིག་རྒྱାດ་པ
 jo khang བྱକ୍ଷଣ
 jo bo བྱକ୍ଷ
 lha sa རྩླ
 pad ma skyid དཔ་མ་සྐྱିດ

KEEPING WATCH

Pad ma skyid དཔལ་མ་སྙିය

A rig rgad po circumambulated the Jo khang the whole night. As soon as the door opened in the early morning, he entered the Jo khang and sat on the floor across from the Jo bo.

"I am so happy to see you," A rig rgad po said.

The Jo bo image smiled in return.

"My feet ache from walking, but you are still smiling!" A rig rgad po said. He continued, "If you've got nothing to say, keep an eye on my shoes. Please don't lose them. They are my only shoes. I'll be right back."

A rig rgad po then took off his shoes, put them on the Jo bo's legs, and went outside to continue his circumambulations.

A bit later, the temple manager was shocked to see a pair of shoes placed on the Jo bo. Just as he was about to throw them away, the Jo bo said, "Please don't throw them away, pure hearted man. A rig rgad po asked me to watch them."

The temple manager was delighted that the Jo bo had spoken and then obediently put the shoes back where they had been.

A rig rgar po eventually returned, took his shoes, and said, "I came back for my shoes. I know you are trustworthy. Thank you!" He then put on his shoes and happily returned to his home.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

jo khang བୋ གହଙ୍

jo bo བୋ

mtsho sngon ༘ ཉ ཁ ཉ

pad ma skyid ད ས ཉ ཕ ཉ

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UNCLE STON PA

UNCLE STON PA AND THE THIEF

Sgron dkar སྤྱନ୍ଦାସ

Many years ago, there was a very poor, but very intelligent man known as Uncle Ston pa. One day he and a thief went to steal some treasures from a rich man. After the two thieves climbed up on the rich man's roof, Uncle Ston pa lowered the other man through the smoke hole. The thief put some treasures in a bag, tied it to the end of the rope, and signaled Uncle Ston pa by tugging the rope. Uncle Ston pa pulled the treasure up to the roof and shouted, "There is a thief! Catch him! Catch him!" As Uncle Ston pa ran away, the thief was caught and seriously beaten by the rich man.

The next day, they went to steal from another rich man. When they got on this rich man's roof, the thief said, "Today, you go through the smoke hole. I'll stay here and pull you up."

Uncle Ston pa agreed, took a bag, and the thief slowly lowered him down into the rich man's house. Uncle Ston pa then stealthily stole some treasures, got into the bag with the treasure, and pulled the rope.

The bag was very heavy, delighting the thief, who was sure it contained many treasures of great value. After he pulled the bag to the top of the roof, he leaned over, and shouted into the room below, "Thief! Catch him! Catch him!"

Meanwhile, Uncle Ston pa jumped out of the bag and raced away with all the treasure, thus becoming a very wealthy man.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

sgron dkar སྤྱନ୍ଦାସ
ston pa ཟଙ୍କା

Sgron dkar. 2017. Uncle Ston pa and the Thief. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:161.

THE BUDDHA IMAGE EATS *RTSAM BA*

Pad+ma skyabs དཔའ་མ་ཤྱାବྸ

I was born in 1990 in Rin chen Village, Rgan gya Township, Bla brang County - one of seven counties in Mdo lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province.

My paternal grandfather (b. 1940) told me that my grandmother's grandparents moved to Rina chena in about 1902 from Rdo dbus Village, Mtsho sngon Province.

As a child, I herded yaks and sheep with others and often heard Uncle Ston pa stories, jokes, and other folklore.

The last half-century has seen many changes in people's lives. Today, villagers cultivate rape and barley.

Many years ago, Uncle Ston pa was so poor that he had nothing of value except a donkey. When spring's lengthening days arrived, he was quickly running out of food. He then asked his rich but miserly neighbor, Stobs rgyal, for some *rtsam ba* 'barley flour'. As he expected, Stobs rgyal refused.

Faced with starvation, Uncle Ston pa thought about how he might be able to change his situation. The next day, Uncle Ston pa filled two bags with sand, loaded them on his donkey, then slowly drove his donkey near Stobs rgyal's courtyard gate.

Stobs rgyal asked in surprise, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to sell my barley flour," Uncle Dun pa replied

Stobs rgyal asked curiously, "Who will buy your old barley flour? And if someone is foolish enough to buy it, what will you eat?"

"Didn't you hear that a rich businessman from Nepal has come to Lha sa and is paying a high price for barley flour? I guess he would give an even higher price for your fresh barley flour," Uncle Ston pa said.

Stobs rgyal thought for a moment and then said, "A lot of money could be made, right?"

"Surely," Uncle Ston pa encouraged.

Stobs rgyal went inside his courtyard and soon returned with two donkeys, each loaded with bags of fresh barley flour. The two men then set off, driving their donkeys along a path that led to Lha sa.

Time passed and the sun slowly went behind a mountain. At dusk, they neared an old, abandoned temple and decided to spend the night there. The temple was full of dust, the walls were broken, and half of the roof was gone, revealing a boundless sky shimmering with countless stars. The temple also had an upright Buddha image with a merciful face.

The two men collected dried branches, lit a fire, and boiled tea. Stobs rgyal had never traveled like this before, was tired from hours of walking, and thus slept as soundly as a pig.

At midnight, Uncle Ston pa silently got up, went outside, opened his bags, and scattered the sand everywhere. Then he returned to where Stobs rgyal was sleeping, took the barley flour from Stobs rgyal's bags and poured it into his own empty bags. Finally, he took a handful of barley flour and scattered some on the ground near the Buddha image and also put some on the Buddha's chest and mouth. Finally, he hung the empty bags on the deity's right hand.

As sunlight struck their faces early the next morning, Stobs rgyal's eyes suddenly became bigger when he noticed his bags of barley flour that he had carefully put near his head were gone. He was even more shocked when he saw the empty bags hanging from the deity's right hand.

Uncle Ston pa exclaimed, "How lucky you are! Buddha ate your barley flour. Nothing bad will happen to you in the future. What a wonderful blessing!"

Stobs rgyal's face turned pale. He took a deep breath and sighed, "Ston pa I can't go with you to sell barley flour in Lha sa."

Uncle Ston pa pretended to be sad and said, "I won't go alone without you. I'll return to our village with you."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bla brang བ୍ରାଙ୍ଗ

Gannan 甘南

Gansu 甘肅

kan su'u ཀାନ୍ସୁ'

mdo lho མୋଲ୍ହୋ

mtsho sngon མତ୍ଶୋଙ୍ଗ

pad+ma skyabs དପାଦ୍ମ୍ସ୍ୱାବ୍ସ

rdo dbus རୋଦ୍ବୁ

rgan gya རଙ୍ଗ୍ୟା

rin chen རିନ୍ଚେନ୍

rtsam ba ར୍ତ୍ସାମା

stobs rgyal ར୍ତ୍ସାଗ୍ୟାଲ

ston pa ར୍ତ୍ସାପା

SEWING UP THE QUEEN'S VAGINA

Rin chen rdo rje རིན་ཆྙ་ར୍ଦୋ་ར୍ྗେ¹

I was born in 1983 in Lo khog (Luoke) Village, Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China. This story is one of my favorite Uncle Ston pa accounts. I do not recall exactly when I first heard it, but it was probably before I attended college. At this time, my family still had some donkeys, cows, and a mule. My family owned between two and three dozen cows at one time. We began selling them when I and my siblings attended school.

Grandmother (Dpa' mo skyid, 1929-2015) lived with my youngest paternal uncle. Twenty-odd village families, including my youngest paternal uncle's family, owned some sheep and goats, which they herded in the steep mountains a two- to three-hour walk from the village. In most cases, only older adult family members grazed them. However, when family emergencies arose, children substituted for the adults. Families that owned only cows and donkeys - like my own - herded their animals in nearby mountains and valleys. This short distance meant that children were regularly responsible for herding cows, donkeys, and mules.

Spring and summer were times that demanded more work because they were times for planting and harvesting, respectively. The village children were responsible for keeping animals from invading the fields and eating the crops. Each village had a committee whose members guarded the fields and put animals caught in the fields in the village shrine courtyard, or in the courtyard of deserted village homes. The owners of these animals then had to pay a fine in grain to redeem their animals. Cash was also allowed, but people rarely had cash. This

Rin chen rdo rje. 2017. Sewing Up the Queen's Vagina. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:165-169.

was evident from observing villagers carrying sacks of grain to other villages in the mountains, trips that often took one or two hours.

Our own village committee charged only a small amount of grain for offending animals that belonged to fellow villagers. However, they kept the animals in walled enclosures. These confined animals were not fed and became emaciated over time. Villagers did not want to see their animals suffer because they were essential for agricultural production.

I heard many stories during spring and summer when I grazed my family's livestock with my peers by the riverside and in nearby hills and mountains. Since the fields were near the river, children had to be on constant guard. Among the children were some adult men who had no children to graze their animals. Taking advantage of our tender age, they asked us to watch their animals in rotation near the fields. In return, they told us stories, sang, and played the flute and guitar. We were thus happy to be assigned such tasks in anticipation of being entertained.

These older men told us the same stories again and again, but boredom never registered. Maybe the attraction was their humorous, eloquent style of storytelling accompanied by dramatic gestures. All these factors in combination invariably had us convulse in laughter. We felt connected to a world of the humorous characters in the stories that seemed very real.

In autumn, harvest occupied us all. In winter, herding was not required, since livestock were free to roam anywhere in and out of the village, including mountains and valleys in the territories of other villages. In winter, we were busy with archery competitions.

My life before going to college was the most memorable time. When no elders were around to tell stories, children formed their own groups for the same purpose. Ghost stories were popular, but humorous stories like Uncle Ston pa were the most popular. Villagers understood Uncle Ston pa as a humorous character, but the accounts they told featuring the humorous idiot-trickster was never called Uncle Ston pa. Instead, the most popular idiot-trickster figure was Glen pa sta le stug 'Big Idiot'.

When I attended middle school and then college, I heard stories of a similar genre with the same character called Uncle Ston pa. When I started telling my stories, I told the story below and used Uncle Ston pa as the name of the main character. I knew my audience was unfamiliar with Glen pa sta le stug. This story was immediately accepted as an Uncle Ston pa story of the naughty kind.

Long ago, stupid Uncle Ston pa's loyal character won the king's heart and he soon completely trusted Uncle Ston pa and enjoyed his company when they were hunting and otherwise entertaining themselves.

One day, the king entrusted Uncle Ston pa with taking the queen to the mountains on a hunting trip. Uncle Ston pa then led the queen and her entourage to a forested mountain far from the capital. About halfway up the mountain, he had the group wait while he and the queen continued up the mountain and hunted near the summit. After a long time of hunting, they prepared to return to where the entourage waited. Just after they started riding, Uncle Ston pa suddenly pulled on his reins, stopped his horse, turned his head, and looked up at the sky. He cupped both his hands around his left ear as though listening intently and then nodded.

Uncle Ston pa turned to the queen, who had observed all his actions, and said, "It has just been revealed to me that we should enjoy a feast that Heaven has specially prepared to celebrate our hunting trip."

The queen hesitated, but followed Uncle Ston pa because she was physically exhausted and hungry after a long day. Uncle Ston pa took the queen to a hidden place in the thick forest near the summit where a profusion of foods and drinks were displayed on a large table, all of which he had prepared earlier.

The queen was surprised, but delighted at what she saw in front of her. The arrangement that Heaven had seemingly made removed her earlier suspicion and confirmed her strong belief in

Heaven's power. After the feast, they rode down a trail leading to the bottom of the mountain.

After a while, Uncle Ston pa stopped again and repeated his previously mysterious antics, while prostrating to the sky. After nodding towards the sky above the summit, he turned to the queen and said, "Heaven has just proclaimed that today is the most auspicious day of the entire year. As usual, Heaven wants to be entertained by the spectacle of mortals having sex and has chosen us to be partners."

Already convinced of Heaven's power, the queen accepted this latest expression of Heavenly will. Uncle Ston pa then took her to another secluded spot in the depths of the forest where he had earlier prepared a bed like the king's. Uncle Ston pa enjoyed every second of the pleasure that they energetically engaged in.

The queen's white mount was endowed with human intelligence and rushed off to report the incident to the king, who was so furious that he wanted to immediately behead Uncle Ston pa.

Uncle Ston pa realized that the white horse had gone to report to the king. Shortly after Uncle Ston pa had finished with the queen, the king appeared in the forest. By this time, Uncle Ston pa had removed any trace of what he and the queen had been up to. Holding a big needle with a long thread strung through the eye of the needle, he was poised as though he was about to sew up the Queen's vagina.

The king could not have been more furious when he saw Uncle Ston pa gazing at the Queen's genitals and yelled at Uncle Ston pa.

Uncle Ston pa wore a very sad, confounded look, as if he was facing an emergency. Pointing at the Queen's genitals, he said to the king, "Dear King, I'm so sorry! I am responsible! The Queen fell off her white horse and has torn herself here. How strange! The wound doesn't bleed. If it is not a wound, why would her flesh not be torn?"

The king realized that, as usual, it was just stupid Uncle Ston pa demonstrating his loyalty. The king then patted Uncle Ston pa on the head, comforting him.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

dpa' mo skyid བ୍ୟାମୋ ଶ୍ଵିଦ୍

gcan tsha ཁ୍ୱାନ୍ ତ୍ଶା

glen pa rta les rtug (yul skad) ཀ୍ୱେଳ୍ ପାର୍ତ୍ତା ଲେସ୍ ର୍ତୁଗ୍ (ୟୁଲ୍ ସ୍କାଦ୍)

Huangnan 黃南

Jianzha 尖扎

lo khog གୋ ଖୋ

Looke 洛科

mtsho sngon མୋ ଶଙ୍ଗୋ

Qinghai 青海

rin chen rdo rje རୈଣ୍ ରୋ ର୍ଜେ

rma lho ཡୋ ଲୋ

ston pa ཡୋ ପା

CHANTING, HERDING, AND CARRYING

Sangs rgyas bkra shis བංས་རྒྱາས་བ්කා ສි

I heard many Uncle Ston pa stories from my neighbor's uncle, Lhun 'grub, my father's second sister's father-in-law. He was well-known for his eloquence and settled many conflicts between villagers.

My parents drove our livestock to distant pastures and lived in a tent for much of the year. Grandmother took care of our house, other property, and my brother and me when we were children.

Uncle Lhun 'grub and his nieces took care of their family's property. He and Grandmother were of the same generation, and grew up in the same community. He often came to my home, we ate together, and he and Grandmother talked about the past.

Uncle Lhun 'grub told us many stories about King Ge ser, ghosts, A rig rgad po, and riddles while spinning his hand prayer wheel as Grandmother softened sheepskins.

This was one of the most memorable times in my life.

Long ago, a mother and her beautiful daughter decided to invite a monk to their home to chant scriptures to protect them and their livestock. As she was walking down a path, she met Uncle Ston pa.

"Where are you going?" Uncle Ston pa inquired.

"I'm going to invite a monk to come chant at our home. Where are you going?" she asked.

"I was chanting at a home and now I'm going to my own home," Uncle Ston Pa answered, pretending to be a monk.

When the woman heard this, she was delighted and asked Uncle Ston pa to come to her home to chant.

Uncle Ston Pa agreed and mumbled the few religious phrases that he knew over and over at different rthymns and speeds, as though he were chanting.

The beautiful daughter got up every morning and drove their sheep to the mountain. Wolves were a serious threat and she had to watch the sheep the whole day. Sometimes her mother went with her.

One day, Uncle Ston pa heard that the mother would go to another village and said, "Today I'll help your daughter. I'll go with her to the mountain and stay there with her."

The mother happily thanked Uncle Ston pa. When they were leaving in the morning, the daughter's mother told them that they should not pee on the mountain. "If you must pee, then go to the foot of the mountain, because the mountain is where deities live," she explained.

While Uncle Ston pa and the beautiful daughter were herding sheep on the mountain, Uncle Ston pa saw a creek. He ran there and drank some water. The girl saw this and asked, "Are you thirsty?"

He said, "Your mother said this is where deities live so this is certainly divine water."

The girl believed Uncle Ston pa and also drank a lot of water.

At noon, the girl told Uncle Ston pa that she had to pee. Take care of the sheep until I return," she said.

Uncle Ston pa said, "I also must pee," looked thoughtful, and then said, "If both of us go pee, wolves will surely attack the sheep. I'll stay here and herd if you take my pee."

The girl asked, "How can I do that?"

"I have a good way," Uncle Ston pa said, and then had sex with the girl.

When the girl reached the foot of the mountain, she met her mother, who asked, "Who is herding the sheep?"

She told her mother that they both had needed to pee, so she had taken Uncle Ston pa's pee so that he could stay behind and protect the sheep.

Her mother asked, "How did you take Uncle Ston pa's pee?"

After the girl told her everything, her mother angrily scolded her.

The girl cried and returned to the mountain. Uncle Ston pa saw her sad face and asked her what had happened.

"Mother scolded me because I took your pee," she sobbed.

"If your mother isn't happy about that, then I can take my pee back," said Uncle Ston pa and then had sex with the girl again.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ge sar གྱଏ

Lhun 'grub རྩླྚ'ଘୁବ

sangs rgyas bkra shis ཅନ୍ତର୍କୁଣ୍ଡଲିଙ୍ଗ

ston pa རྩླྚପ

UNCLE STON PA VISITS XI'AN

Sangs rgyas bkra shis བංජ རුජ སං དේ ལි

Uncle Ston pa heard people talking about monks from his home community who visited such big cities as Beijing and Shanghai where they met many rich Chinese. They made a lot of money and then bought expensive cars and houses when they got back home.

Uncle Ston pa thought about it and then decided to go to Zi ling by bus. When he arrived, he went to a store and bought an outfit of monk's clothes. By this time, he was very hungry and went to the area near the train station where many Tibetans operated businesses. He met a man he knew and said, "Hello! What are you doing here? Such a lucky coincidence to meet you here!"

"Yes, I'm here to buy coral. How about you?" the man replied.

"I'm here to buy a car. I did some caterpillar fungus business this year and earned a lot. Come and eat something with me," Uncle Ston pa said, putting his arm around the man's shoulder.

The man trusted Uncle Ston pa and followed him to a Tibetan restaurant where Uncle Ston pa ordered a big platter of boiled mutton, two bowls of noodles, and a thermos of milk tea. They enjoyed the food and tea as Uncle Ston pa talked authoritatively about his successful business.

"I've got to go to the toilet," Uncle Ston pa said when he was full.

His companion waited for Uncle Ston pa until it got dark, and then the boss forced him to pay for the food and tea.

Meanwhile, Uncle Ston pa found a cheap hotel and was soon blissfully asleep.

Early the next morning he got up, put on the monk's clothes, bought a ticket, and soon started his journey to Xi'an. When he arrived, he asked people how to reach the Big Wild Goose Pagoda.

After getting the directions he needed, he took a bus and was soon admiring the large image of Tang Seng near the Pagoda. He then sat cross-legged and pretended to chant.

Many Chinese people noticed his unusual clothes and very curiously came and listened to what none of them could understand.

A bit later, Uncle Ston pa heard someone calling to him. He slowly opened his eyes, and saw a middle-aged woman. He spoke to her in broken Qinghai Chinese dialect, which the woman could barely understand.

She then began weeping and told him that she had divorced her husband a few days earlier, and also confided that this was her third divorce.

Uncle Ston pa closed his eyes, pretended to be meditating, and then said, "There is something wrong with you. I can help you if you like."

The woman joyfully invited Uncle Ston pa to her luxurious apartment, where she offered him fruit, and cooked and served delicious food.

After eating, belching loudly, and farting silently, Uncle Ston pa took out a very old scripture book and pretended to read and chant.

After a couple of hours, the woman asked Uncle Ston pa to rest. She then cooked more food for their supper, which they ate together.

"It's already dark and you certainly can't easily find a hotel now. Why not stay here tonight?" the woman suggested.

Uncle Ston pa pretended to be very reluctant but, of course, he eventually agreed.

The woman then suggested that he take a bath and showed him to the bathroom. Uncle Ston po enjoyed taking a bath, while hoping his host would pay him for his chanting. After finishing his bath, Uncle Ston pa returned to the living room where the woman was lying on a long sofa, wearing only panties and a red bra. She held up a big towel and rubbed Uncle Ston pa's body gently, but suggestively.

Uncle Ston pa was unable to control himself and they soon made love on the thickly carpeted floor.

The next morning, neither of them mentioned anything about the previous night. The woman thanked Uncle Ston pa for chanting and gave him 5,000 *yuan*.

Uncle Ston pa looked very regretful and sad, gave her his cellphone number, and then went to a sauna where he enjoyed himself. While there, he got a text message from the woman that said, "I'm sorry to have seduced you. I heard that monks are very fresh and pure and women who have sex with them will become younger. That was why I cheated you. I've never been married. I'm sorry."

Uncle Ston pa laughed loudly when he finished reading this and responded, "It's OK. Don't be sorry. I'm not a real monk. I have three children."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Beijing 北京

Qinghai 青海

sangs rgyas bkra shis རྒྱା རྒྱା བ୍ରା ག୍ରା ག୍ରା

Shanghai 上海

ston pa མ༌ དୋ དୋ

Xi'an 西安

yuan 元

zi ling ཛୀ ཚି དି

GRAIN IN THE NAVELS

Pad+ma dbang chen དཔལ+ማ རྡଙ୍ଗ ཕେଚ

Children my age often asked old men to tell them stories and an old man who knew many folktales told me the one I give below. Recently, children are keenly interested in TV programs and have very little interest in folklore.

Uncle Ston pa had a beautiful young cousin who had bright eyes, a pale face, and a slim body. One day, she felt uncomfortable and went to town to see a doctor, who examined her pulse and then prescribed some medicine. She took the medicine but did not get any better. She then went to Uncle Ston pa's home and asked for advice.

Uncle Ston pa suggested she find a meditator, who lived at the foot of a mountain near her home. He said, "Don't look at his face, just listen to him. He'll tell you what to do. Climb up the mountain and then come down. You'll be sure to see him."

She went home, collected some gifts, and set off. Meanwhile, Uncle Ston pa put on a meditator's clothes and stuck a big piece of fake hair that was actually part of a yak tail on top of his head. Taking a shortcut, he quickly reached the foot of the mountain and waited for his beautiful cousin. After some moments, she came and bowed her head in respect.

Speaking in an artificial voice, Uncle Ston pa said, "I have already divined your problem. I have a solution. Put a wheat grain in your navel. I'll put a barley grain in my navel. We'll then exchange them without using our hands."

The cousin hesitated, but finally accepted the meditator's suggestion. They took off all their clothes and tried to exchange the barley and wheat grains by rubbing their bellies together. The cousin

felt something enter her body and said, "Something's wrong! Did you feel it?"

"Please concentrate on exchanging the grains. Don't think about anything else," Uncle Ston pa instructed.

Satisfied after having had sex, Uncle Ston pa returned home using the shortcut. His cousin climbed up and then climbed down the mountain. It took her a long time.

Uncle Ston pa's cousin soon recovered from her illness. Happy about this, she went to Uncle Ston pa's home and thanked him for giving her such a good suggestion.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

pad+ma dbang chen དཔའ་མ་དབང་ཆེན
ston pa རྩོན་པ

FOREIGN ADVENTURES

Pad+ma dbang chen དཔལ+ማ བංචෙන¹

Uncle Ston pa was asked to accompany a high-ranking *bla ma* to Thailand and translate for him while he attended a meeting to discuss religious points of view and rituals.

One early morning, Uncle Ston pa and the *bla ma* went to the Zi ling Airport to take a non-stop flight to Bangkok. Once on the plane, Uncle Ston pa was immediately aroused by the beautiful air hostesses. He wanted to trick one of them, but passengers were forbidden to move about the plane. Still, unable to control himself, he winked at the hostesses and did his best to behave flirtatiously when they served drinks and food to the passengers.

The hostesses were true professionals, and returned smiling faces, which he interpreted was a keen interest on their part in making further contact with him.

Uncle Ston pa was a bit nervous because this was his first airplane flight. He was also afraid the *bla ma* might scold him, so he could do nothing but suppress his raging lust.

They soon reached Bangkok and went to the meeting venue. After the first day of meetings, the sponsor took all the participants to a luxury hotel where a room had been prepared for each. Uncle Ston pa happily rested in the hotel, where visions of the beautiful hostesses he had encountered on the plane appeared repeatedly in his mind.

Suddenly, a telephone rang. He answered.

A woman in a low smooth voice said, "Sawadee cup."

He understood no Thai, but pretended that he did, repeating whatever she said.

The woman said many things and he answered, "*Lags so,*" each time she paused.

Soon after the woman hung up the phone, a robust knock sounded on the door. When Uncle Ston pa opened the door, he beheld a young, tall woman who was so attractive that his mouth hung open and his heart stopped beating for several seconds. He had never seen such a beauty before.

Clutching his hand, she came into his room.

Uncle Ston pa assumed that, as a foreign woman, she was eager to have sex with a Tibetan man.

When the woman greeted him in a vaguely masculine voice, Uncle Ston pa thought in surprise, "Hm, foreign women are different than young women back home!"

Unable to communicate verbally, Uncle Ston pa thought it was a good chance to trick a foreign woman and made various sexual gestures.

The visitor then removed all her clothing except her panties, thinking, "What a stupid man. Just see how I cheat you."

The two tricksters then lay together. Uncle Ston pa soon noticed that the "woman" had a penis. When the lady-boy gestured at his bottom, Uncle Ston pa smiled.

After he finished having sex with the lady-boy and the lady-boy had left the room, Uncle Ston pa lay contentedly, thinking he was the cleverest man in the world.

The next morning, some young volunteers came to invite the *bla ma*, Uncle Ston pa, and other participants to breakfast to be followed by a day of sightseeing. When they checked out, they learned that Uncle Ston pa had incurred a 600 US dollar expense for the services of a young lady-boy the previous night. A young volunteer said, "Uncle, you spent 3,600 *yuan* on services last night that you'll need to pay from your own funds."

Uncle Ston pa was so stunned by this that he fell to the floor, pretending to have lost consciousness.

One of the volunteers said, "Poor bumpkin, let's send him to the hospital. He is our responsibility."

Uncle Ston pa smiled inwardly because he knew he had diabetes and thought this would allow for free treatment and, possibly, a permanent cure.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bla ma བ୍ଲାମା

lags so ལାଗସୋ

pad+ma dbang chen དାଙ୍କ'ମାଙ୍କ'ଚେନ୍

ston pa རୁଣ୍ଟା

yuan 元

zi ling རୀଣିଙ୍

NUNS AND NAVELS

Wen Xiangcheng 文祥呈

I am a Minhe Mangghuer (Tu) born in 1981. A Tibetan acquaintance told me these two Uncle Dongba stories in Chinese. I read several Uncle Dongba stories in English in about 2004 so I had a general idea about him. To my knowledge, Minhe Mangghuer lack stories about a trickster that goes by a certain name. Also, I never heard anyone tell an Uncle Dongba story in Mangghuer. However, I intend to tell these two stories in Mangghuer when I meet some of my friends.

Muni niereni Wen Xiangcheng gela bi. Bi shi 1981 niandu Qinghai Sheng Minhe Xiandu shengkesang Mangghuer kun bi. Ni liangge Dongba Awuni bihuangni yige Tiebie xuesheng dameidu jianglaji huba. Bi dagai 2004 niandu Dongba Awuni bihuangni Yingyula zhurusangni jige wuji ba. Ningkekula bi Dongba Awu yamerdage kun bikuni dagai ge meidielang. Bi mulasa yige nenggan kun guori kunni gezhong banfala huerghuerku ningda bihuang Minhe Mangghuersidu wuguang. Dongba Awuni bihuangni dani Mangghuer gela jianglakuni bi ye suonuosisang gui. Dongba Awuni bihuangsi hudu renao bang. Bi khuainuoher nukuersinang qigeku Mangghuerla jianglaji hua.

Uncle Dongba really wanted to have sex with many of the beautiful nuns who lived in a nunnery. He faced a problem, however, because the nunnery had rules that prohibited men from entering. Uncle Dongba then shaved his head, put powder on his face so he looked more like a woman, donned a nun's robe, and then entered the nunnery.

Several months later, many nuns' bellies began swelling. At this point, the abbess thought, "Hmm, something is strange here. Maybe a man is living among us. It's best to check everyone who lives

here." She then gathered all those who lived at the nunnery, told two nuns to hold the ends of a rope and pull it tight, and then the abbess lay down under the rope and ordered everyone to jump over, one by one. When the nuns jumped over the rope, the abbess found nothing unusual.

Uncle Dongba put his penis under his sash and was the last to jump over the rope. The abbess also noticed nothing strange when he jumped over.

Uncle Dongba was delighted with this success and thought, "Oh, I will jump again to show how brave I am and how high I can jump." He jumped again, but he jumped so energetically that his penis flopped out from under his sash. The abbess then discovered that he was not a woman. Uncle Dongba was then immediately expelled from the nunnery.

DONGBA AWU MA AGUER LAMASI

Yige aguer lamasini ximiedu zaihangtingda aguer lama wulan bang bei. Aguer lama ximiedu nengkunsini lai ruoghalang. Ningku Dongba Awu jiaodur mulaji yageji ni ximiedu ruoji xiji ti aguer lamasinige xighani sha?

Yitiandu gan banfage mulaji gherghajiang. Gan terghaiku suzunang qiergha he, damadinang fen diger sake, aguer lamasi musiku banzalage lianbie ti ximiedu huerghur ruo xijiang. Dongba Awu ti ximiedu ruo xiku ti zaihang aguer lamasini yige yigejia muli xighajiang. Jige yue berjiang ma aguer lamasini gediesisi yigua shuguotu gherrijiang bei. Tingku ni ximieni terghai huanglajiang a. Gan mulasa ni ximieku aguer lama jiura kending nengkunge bang. Mughashini gan diesi yitiaoni liangge zhuersa bughe liangkuodi boghuolinherge huyagejiang, jienang diesi duoruo engta saojiang. Ningku gan ximieku yigua aguer lamasini yige yigejia ganni terghai zhaghaku diesidisa diaoli nuoqigeji. Gan mulakuni aguer lamasi

banzala duoruonang yang a musila guang ma, dan ni jiura nengkunge bisa bi qigekunang bei ninggeji.

Ximieku aguer lamasi yige yigejia diaoli nuoqijiang, ximieni terghai chizhuo yige a qigesang guang. Zuihou yige Dongba Awudu kuerjiang. Gan qiuqierjia chizhuonang banzala puji jiuranang bieke xighadeghanang diesidisa diaoli nuoqijiang. Ximieni terghai haishi yang a qigesang guang. Dongba Awu mulaji, bi diaoliji ningtai wenduer bang ma, puzage diaoliku ni aguer lamasidu bi diaoliji yamer khedoubanggeji ge jigha wa. Ninggedanang gan khuoluosa puderaji puzage diaolijiang. Ma! Nao yihui gan diaoliji tai kuqitaidajiang ma ganni chizhuo puji duoruosa deghela gherrijiang! Ningku ni ximieni terghai meidie gejiang, ganni yidun ciza ximiesa zhua gherghajiang.

A WHEAT SEED AND A MILLET SEED

Wen Xiangcheng 文祥呈

Uncle Dongba had a very beautiful cousin. Every day he thought about how to have sex with her but, sadly, he never had a chance to make his wish come true. One day he came up with an idea, lay on his bed, and pretended to be seriously ill. Then he asked one of his friends to inform his cousin that he was very ill.

His cousin was very concerned about him and came to visit. When she arrived, Uncle Dongba told her, "I have a very strange disease. Only one person can help me. He is a powerful recluse who lives in a mountain cave. Please consult him. If you find him, he will tell you how my disease can be cured. There are two ways to go to the cave. One is by a sandy path. The other is a very narrow, rocky path. When you go to the cave, please use the sandy path. When you return, please use the narrow, rocky path. You will find that this powerful hermit looks like me."

Uncle Dongba cousin agreed and left to look for the hermit. As soon as she left, Uncle Dongba quietly set off, taking the narrow, rocky path. The sandy path was unstable and it took the cousin a long time to reach the cave. In contrast, Uncle Dongba got to the cave very quickly. As soon as Uncle Dongba got inside the cave, he threw on a robe, sat cross-legged, and pretended to meditate.

When the cousin reached the cave, she came inside, knelt in front of Uncle Dongba, and told him why she had come.

Uncle Dongba said, "If you want your cousin to get well, you need to help him. Put a grain of wheat in his navel. Then put a grain of millet in your navel. Find a way to make the grain of wheat and grain of millet touch each other. If the two grains touch each other many times, your cousin will soon improve, otherwise, he will die."

Uncle Dongba's cousin thanked the hermit and left, using the narrow, rocky path. This path was winding and she could only go slowly. Meanwhile, Uncle Dongba slid down the sandy path and reached the bottom of the mountain in a very short time. As soon as Uncle Dongba got back home, he lay on his bed, pretending he hadn't moved.

When his cousin got home, he asked, "What did the powerful hermit tell you?"

His cousin repeated what the hermit had said, took off Uncle Dongba's robe, put a grain of wheat in his navel, took off her own robe, and put a grain of millet in her navel. The two cousins then lay against each other, trying to bring the two grains into contact. Meanwhile, Dongba's penis got very hard. When Uncle Dongba thrust his penis in his cousin's vagina, she squealed, "Oh, Cousin! Your penis is inside me!"

Uncle Dongba said, "Please ignore it. Curing my disease is more important than that. Let's make sure the grains of wheat and millet rub against each other so I'll be cured!"

QINKUO MA NARAMU GHULA BIEQING ZHIKE

Dongba Awudu gujiu xijundiaoge bisa zou hudu zaihangbang bei. Dongba Awu mulakuni ni zaihang gujiunang yajige naduni sha. Yitiandu gandu dughuli sanarge baojiang. Gan linjiarnang daodaji riji keliji, "Qi muni gujiu xijundiaonige daodala xi a. Dameidu shuguo bieqing kuerjiang geji keli." Ganni linjiar yaoku gan hegangdinang engtadegha bieqing zhuangke saojiang.

Dongba Awuni linjiar xiku kelijiang ma, ganni xijundiao mulaji, muni gujiu gaga bieqireji bisa bi malige jila yao wa ninggeji. Dongba Awuni gujiu xijundiao riku Dongba Awu keliji, "Muni ning tai damei bieqingni zhang yigejian jiji berkunang. Nige kun muni gerni nara pudaku beidani tige wula dieretu yige yaodongdu saoser bang. Ti yaodongdu kuerku mar liangtiao bang. Yitiao khughuer shalu bang,

yitiao shuduer mula mar bang. Muni diao qi ti kunni yige yerrila xi a, puzhis bi hugu saoku ya genia. Ti kuni wujisa dameidu xidera buralang. Xi ma gan qimeidu keliji huni. Qi xikundu shalula yao, rikundu mula marsa yao ma mali bang."

Dongba Awuni gujiu xijundiao dai diamangsa gharsang bie ni, Dongba Awu ye qiuqierjia dagha gharrijiang. Ganni gujiu gan kelisang daghaji ti shalusa yaojiang, Dongba Awu ti mula marsa yaojiang. Shaludi chan shazi ma tashi bikula sanserji hudu maoni bang, tingku ganni gujiu wuda wudaji cai ti yaodongdu kuerjiang. Dongba Awu yaosang mula mar kuoluobang ma, danshi lai sanserkula yaoji mali bang. Ningku ganni gujiu sange kuerji ritula, Dongba Awu yaodongdu kuer, diarsinang aruerjidanang zhabeila saojiang.

Yizhen bersa ganni gujiu kuerliesi baliesijia kuerji rijiang. Ganni gujiu gani mieshi suoguodi terghai sange mergudeghanang gan ningdu yala risangnang kelijiang. Dongba Awu daonang diger bianligha keliji, "Qini gujiu gagani bieqing hudu damei bang, nini qi nukuer berku kerlikunang. Qi xiku gujiu gaganang kuaizidu qingkuo yikuer taibi, jieni kuaizidunang naramu yikuer taibi. Ningku ta ghula ni qingkuo ma naramuni yihui yihuijia pengkegha. Ning ge ma ganni bieqing daiguo berkunang. Ning laigesa gan huguku nang."

Dongba Awuni gujiu yaodongku tige kundu pohuange keliku yaojiang. Gan khariji rikuyandu ti mula marsa yaojiang. Mula mar khuoluo bang bei, tingku gan wula zhuerdu kuersa wudajiang. Dongba Awu gujiunang khainuosa diernang aruerjidanang ti shalusa yaojiang. Shalu sanserkula Dongba Awu bangezi hunghuruser daiguo wula duoruo bao rijiang, tingku gan gerdunang gujiusanang mali kuerjiang. Gerdunang dai kuerku Dongba Awu hegangdinang engta saodeghanang gujiunang xigeji. Yizhen bersa ganni gujiu hesihasijia kuerji rijiang. Riku gan ersigheji, "Ti kun qimeidu yanggeji kelila ya?" Dongba Awuni gujiu zou ninggeji ninggeji kelilang ninggeji. Tingku gan ti kun kelisang daghaji Dongba Awu ma jieni dierni tai hejiang. Tai heku Dongba Awuni kuaizidu qingkuo yikuer taibijiang, jieni kuaizidunang naramu yikuer taibijiang. Ninggeku Dongba Awudu

keliji, qi ni qingkuo ma naramuni pengkegha ninggeji. Dongba Awu gujiunang gediesidi dari gherxi kuaizinang liangge pengkeghaku ganni chizhuo shuguodage bai gherrijiang. Ningku gan chizhuonang gujiuni dugudu chike xighajiang. Ganni gujiu khailaji, "Yang bi khedengdage muni biandu ruo xijiang!" Dongba Awu keliji, "Ai, qini tini xian bao guanli a, da ghula xian ni qingkuo ma naramuni xiacha pengkegha ya. Ninggeku saijingher muni bieqing berkunangla. Puza bi hugu saoku yagenia?" Dongba Awuni gujiu chenglisa ganni gujiu gaga kelikuni duilang bei. Ninggedeghanang Dongba Awu gan gujiu xijundiaonang jiergha xigha saojiang bei.

CAN YOU SEE MY YAK?

Libu Lakhi (Li Jianfu 李建富, Dawa Tenzin བྱା'བ བྱା'ན རྩେ'ନ)

My name is Libu Lakhi (Li Jianfu, Dawa Tenzin). I was born in Dashui Village, Mingshen Township in 1981. I am a Namuyi Tibetan. Uncle Ston pa stories are not told in my village, however, I heard many such stories during the years I spent studying in Kangding and in Xining. I heard this story, which I tell in Namuyi Khato.

ɳa³³ tɛ³³ na⁵⁴mzi⁵⁴ la²¹kʰi³³ ja³³, li³³ bu³³ la²¹ kʰi³³ mi²¹, o²¹ljo²¹
o⁵⁴ndzo⁵⁴ la²¹ga³³ dzɔ²¹qv²¹ dzu⁵⁴ su⁵⁴. ɳa⁵⁴ so⁵⁴ qʰfu²¹ khv⁵⁴ ru²¹
du³³ ro²¹. a⁵⁴kʰə³³ tən⁵⁴mpa⁵⁴ kvu²¹sə²¹ ko³³ko³³ tha³³ gi⁵⁴ ma³³
ndzo²¹ tɛ³³ o²¹ljo²¹ kʰa³³ti²¹ na²¹ eə⁵⁴ni²¹ tha²¹ræ²¹ so²¹ tha³³
gi⁵⁴ dzo²¹. a⁵⁴kʰə³³ tən⁵⁴mpa⁵⁴ tʰi⁵⁴ ly⁵⁴ su⁵⁴ la²¹ ʂo³³ su⁵⁴ ɳa³³
ræ³³ gi⁵⁴ ka³³ la²¹ no⁵⁴ ʂo³³ su⁵⁴.

Uncle Ston pa lived in a small village at the foot of a mountain. Every morning, he drove his yaks up into the mountain. He was very glad that in the evening, his yaks came home by themselves.

One evening, however, one yak did not return. Uncle Ston pa was worried, climbed a ladder up to the roof of his home, and looked at the mountains, hoping to see his lost yak.

The houses in this village were built so close together that the roofs touched each other. Not seeing his yak, Uncle Ston pa walked onto the roof of his neighbor's home where a newly married couple lived. As Uncle Ston pa stood on the roof, he heard some excited giggling. Curious, he tiptoed over to the smoke hole and looked down. He was very interested to see the young couple completely naked, holding each other, and talking to each other very sweetly.

The husband said, "My dear, would you please spread your legs wide apart? I've never seen 'it' very closely."

His wife said, "Sure!" and then spread her legs as far apart as she could.

Her husband then looked and looked at 'it' in a very interested way.

The wife said, "What do you see?"

The husband answered, "I can see everything!"

When Uncle Ston pa heard this, he shouted through the smoke hole, "Can you see my missing yak?"

ŋa³³ bu³³n_i³³ nu³³ a²¹ ndo⁵⁴

i²¹n_i²¹a³³ ſe³³ te³³, su⁵⁴ a⁵⁴k^he³³ tən⁵⁴mpa⁵⁴ ɲu²¹ ti²¹ gvu³³ dzo³³ di²¹ k^he²¹. a⁵⁴k^he³³ tən⁵⁴mpa⁵⁴ ti²¹n_i²¹ma³³ ta⁵⁴ ji²¹tso⁵⁴ bu³³n_i³³ ty²¹ le³³ nu³³ku⁵⁴ t^he²¹ ey⁵⁴. hu²¹gvu²¹ te²¹ bu³³n_i³³ t^hi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴ jo²¹jo³³ li⁵⁴ da⁵⁴ qvu²¹r⁵⁴ ka³³ka²¹r⁵⁴ xe²¹ nda³³ji²¹ le³³. ti²¹ha²¹ te²¹væ³³qæ⁵⁴ t^hi⁵⁴ki⁵⁴ o²¹ba²¹ li⁵⁴ dzy²¹ ro³³te⁵⁴ ti²¹p^ha³³li³³ma⁵⁴ dzy²¹ ro³³ji²¹le²¹. a⁵⁴k^he³³ tən⁵⁴mpa⁵⁴ p^ha²¹le²¹ji³³mi³³ do⁵⁴ mo⁵⁴ lo²¹ey²¹ka³³bu³³n_i³³ t^hi⁵⁴p^ha⁵⁴ lo²¹te²¹ti²¹ga²¹ha³³ma³³ndo⁵⁴. me³³k^ha²¹ka³³lo²¹pæ⁵⁴bo²¹ka²¹ji³³mi³³la²¹da³³lo²¹ey²¹ka³³lo²¹. bo²¹ka²¹ji³³mi³³te²¹te²¹k^hvu³³ka³³lo²¹pæ⁵⁴p^ha⁵⁴su⁵⁴lo³³. o⁵⁴t^he²¹ta²¹lo²¹lo²¹mu²¹te²¹o²¹mo²¹ji³³mi³³qo²¹lo³³su⁵⁴o³³k^ha²¹t^ho²¹su²¹ræ³³gi⁵⁴ro²¹. qvu⁵⁴qvu⁵⁴qo²¹lo³³mi²¹lo²¹te²¹su⁵⁴n_i³³p^hu⁵⁴mi⁵⁴ba²¹tshə³³ma³³Yi⁵⁴mu⁵⁴qæ⁵⁴ko⁵⁴ka²¹r³³di²¹le³³. p^hæ²¹t^he²¹t^hi⁵⁴gu⁵⁴te⁵⁴nu³³qa³³qa⁵⁴mæ²¹do³³qæ⁵⁴mu⁵⁴t^hi²¹ŋa³³th^y²¹mu²¹ræ³³ndo⁵⁴ma⁵⁴ndzo²¹s^ə³³lo³³di²¹. mbz^ə²¹t^hi⁵⁴gvu⁵⁴t^he⁵⁴ka³³me³³ŋu²¹o⁵⁴t^hi²¹ŋa²¹te⁵⁴ko³³ma³³p^ha⁵⁴mu⁵⁴o⁵⁴lo²¹di²¹le²¹. te³³go⁵⁴go⁵⁴ndo⁵⁴le³³ŋu²¹te²¹, wa²¹ma²¹ji³³go⁵⁴go⁵⁴ha³³ndo⁵⁴p^ha⁵⁴, ma³³ndo⁵⁴ſo²¹ma³³dzo³³di²¹. a⁵⁴k^he³³tən⁵⁴mpa⁵⁴ræ³³gi⁵⁴ro²¹ka³³li³³ma³³ſu³³mu⁵⁴t^hi⁵⁴ŋu²¹ce⁵⁴nu³³ŋa³³bu³³n_i⁵⁴li³³ma⁵⁴dzy²¹t^hi⁵⁴p^ha⁵⁴ræ³³a²¹ndo⁵⁴ŋu²¹di²¹le³³.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Dashui 大水

Dawa Tenzin, zla ba bstan 'dzin བླା ବ୍ସତାନ ད୍ଚେନ୍

Kangding 康定

Li Jianfu 李建富

Libu Lakhi

Mingshen 民胜

Namuyi 纳木依, na mu zhi ཙା ମୁ ଝି

ston pa རྩତ୍ପା

Xining 西宁

AN OLD YAK FINDS YOUTHFUL ENERGY

Mo lha dgu 'khor ཡོ་ལྷ་དགུ་'ຂོར

A herdsman was riding his old yak bull into town. The yak walked slowly, with his head down. Sometimes, the herdsman thought the old yak would stop completely, and then he would kick it in the sides. The old yak would then walk a little faster for a while, but then slow down again.

After about two hours they got to the county town, which had only one road. There were shops along the sides of the road selling the usual food, clothes, shoes, and various beverages. The herdsman noticed one shop that had a picture of a big yak on top. The yak looked very energetic. It was running very fast across the grassland. The sign said: Pay fifty *yuan* and your old yak will run like a young yak! Your money will be returned if the yak doesn't run very fast!

The herdsman said to himself, "Great! If that's true, it's surely worth fifty *yuan*." He rode up to the shop and knocked on the door. The door was unusual because it was very wide. "I wonder why this door is so wide?" the herdsman thought.

Uncle Ston pa opened the door and gave the herdsman a big smile. "Hello! Just one look at your old yak and I know why you have come here! You are here to because you want your old yak to run like a young, energetic yak! Right?"

The herdsman said, "That's exactly right. I'll give you fifty *yuan* and you'll make my yak run like a young yak, right?"

Uncle Ston pa said, "Sure! And if your old yak doesn't run fast, I'll return your money immediately! Now, sir, please dismount and back your yak into my shop. I'll then begin my work. The whole process will take less than a minute."

The herdsman dismounted and slowly backed his yak into the shop through the wide door. When the yak was inside the shop, with

only its head and front feet outside the shop door, Uncle Ston pa said, "OK! Stop! That's far enough. I'll now begin my treatment."

Uncle Ston pa took two bricks, pushed the old yak bull's back legs apart, and then smashed the yak's testicles together between the two bricks. With an angry roar, the yak raced down the street so fast that only a cloud of dust remained several seconds later.

"Oh, my Buddha! Your treatment really works!" said the herdsman. "Wonderful! It is surely worth fifty *yuan*! But I have one question - how will I ever catch my yak?"

Uncle Ston pa smiled, held a brick in either hand, looked at the herdsman, and said, "Sir, that's no problem. Just pull down your pants and you'll soon run so fast that you'll catch your yak in a jiffy!"

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

mo lha dgu 'khor ཡོ་ལྷ་དགྱུ་'ຂୋར
yuan 元

A CLEVER BUS DRIVER

Khro bo rkyal stong ຂໍຮ່ວຍສົງ

Uncle Ston pa was driving a bus down a dirt road in the countryside. The only empty seat in the bus was just behind the driver's seat. The seat was for two people. The empty seat was next to a nun, who sat quietly by the window.

Uncle Ston pa noticed a handsome young soldier waving at him on the road. Eager for another paying customer, Uncle Ston pa stopped and the soldier got on the bus. Noticing that there was only one empty seat, the soldier quickly paid and sat by the nun. Out of the corner of his eye, the soldier noticed that, despite her short hair, the nun was quite pretty, which stimulated his male organ.

About five minutes later, the nun stood up and asked the driver to let her off so she could return to her nunnery. When she got off, Uncle Ston pa turned to the soldier and murmured, "She's pretty, right?"

"Yes, very pretty," the soldier said.

"I guess you'd like to have sex with her, right?" Uncle Ston pa said.

"Of course," the soldier said.

"I'll tell you how," Uncle Ston pa said. "Every evening at exactly six-thirty, she goes to a little forest at the bottom of the hill where her nunnery is located. You can hide behind a tree. You're lucky, because I've got a bag full of '*cham*' masks that I'm taking to the monastery up the road. I'll give you one now. Just before six-thirty, put on the mask. When she comes to the grove and starts prostrating, you should jump out and tell her that you are a deity. She'll then do whatever you tell her to do."

"Great!" the soldier said, took the mask Uncle Ston pa offered, and got off the bus.

An hour later it was almost six-thirty. The soldier put on the mask and, sure enough, at exactly six-thirty the nun came to the little forest and began prostrating and chanting. The soldier jumped out from behind the tree and said, "Oh! I'm a deity!"

The pious nun said, "Oh! A deity! What should I do?"

The soldier, disguised as a deity, said, "You have to have sex with me!"

The nun said, "Oh! Yes! You are a deity. I'll do whatever you say. But please remember that I'm a nun so I must keep my virginity. You must do it here," and patted her bottom.

The soldier hesitated, but remembering how pretty the nun was, he agreed.

They both pulled down their pants and each assumed their position. The soldier finished his work after a few minutes and pulled up his pants. The nun did the same. Then the soldier looked at the nun, pulled off his mask, and said, "Ha! Ha! I'm the soldier from the bus! How stupid of you to believe that I was a deity!"

Then Uncle Ston pa pulled off the nun's mask and said, "Ha! I'm the bus driver!"

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'cham དྲଙ୍କଣ

khro bo rkyal stong རྒྱର୍ଭୁର୍ବୁଦ୍ଧି

ston pa རྒྱର୍ଭି

UNCLE STON PA TAKES A BATH

Mi chag don 'grub ພິກດາດົກຂ່າຍ¹

Uncle Ston pa had not had a bath for a long time. It was summer, so he thought he'd go to a small beach he knew by the river that ran by his village and wash up. When he got to the small secluded beach, he looked around and saw that nobody else was there. He then took off his very dirty clothes, washed them, and hung them to dry on some nearby bushes. Then he walked into the river and had a good time moving around in the water, pretending he was a frog. It was a very hot summer day, so he really enjoyed the cool river water.

After some time, Uncle Ston pa got tired of this and wanted to dry off, put on his clothes, and leave. He looked at the beach and didn't see anybody. He carefully walked out of the water onto the beach. The sand felt good under his feet. The bright sun on his wet body also made him feel very relaxed. He decided that he would take a nap. He noticed an old newspaper under a bush. He walked over, picked it up, lay down on the soft sand and, just to be safe, put the newspaper over his genitals.

A short time later, Uncle Ston pa was awakened by a little girl shaking his shoulder. When she saw his eyes flutter open, she asked, "Uncle, what's under that newspaper?"

Uncle Ston pa said sleepily, "It's a bird. You must never touch that newspaper. If you do, the bird might fly away," and then he went back to sleep.

Later, when he woke up, he was in the hospital. His genitals felt incredibly painful - as though they were on fire! When the doctors asked him what had happened, all he could remember was the little girl by the river.

A few hours later, two policemen went to her home in a village and asked her what she had done.

Mi chag don 'grub. 2017. Uncle Ston pa Takes a Bath. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:195-196.

She said, "I like birds so I decided to play with Uncle's bird. I took off the newspaper and started playing with it. While I was playing with it, it got really long, like a snake, and then it shot something at me. I was so angry that I kicked its eggs, broke its neck, and set its nest on fire."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

mi chag don 'grub ມີເກາດດອນ 'ກຽບ
ston pa ສົ່ວພາ

NOT REMAINING QUIET

Dpa' rgod khyi nag ཅཔ་རྒୋດ ຂྱି නାଙ

Late one morning, Uncle Ston pa got up, pulled himself out of bed, and then had the breakfast his wife had prepared for him. After breakfast, he left his unwashed cup and bowl on the table, mounted his motorcycle, and headed to the township town. On the way, he thought about what he might do for some fun. He knew a lot of things to do for fun, but the problem was that he only had one *yuan* in his pocket.

When he got to town, he went to a small, dirty room where pornographic videos were shown twenty-four hours a day. Uncle Ston pa paid one *yuan*, and sat down on a stool, joining several other men in the room.

He had seen such films before, but for two hours he was mesmerized by the sound of women squealing ecstatically as men had sex with them in all sorts of positions. Uncle Ston pa was terrifically aroused by all of this and thought, "As soon as I get back home, I'll have sex with my wife and tell her to make such sounds. How exciting that will be!"

Uncle Ston pa drove his motorcycle very quickly and, when he got back home he rushed inside. His wife was lying on their bed, resting after hours of work outside. He jumped on top of her and said, "Let's have sex immediately!"

Dutifully, she removed her clothes, lay on her back, and said, "OK, go ahead."

Uncle Ston pa said, "This time, I want you to make some loud sounds! That will be even more exciting!" and then Uncle Ston pa began madly pounding his wife who, as usual, didn't say anything until suddenly she screamed, "Ah...hiiiii!"

Uncle Ston pa was so disturbed by this sound that he could not continue.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

dpa' rgod khyi nag བ୍ୟାର୍ଗୋଡ ຂ୍ୟାନ୍ଦିଙ୍
ston pa ལ୍ଟାଙ୍

THE LOTTERY

Rgod po ltag khra རྒୋດ ཛོ སྐ୍ରା

One cold winter, Uncle Ston pa bought an old donkey for one hundred *yuan* from a villager named Rin chen, who agreed to bring the donkey to Uncle Ston pa's home the next day. However, the next day, Rin chen walked over to Uncle Ston pa's home and said, "I'm very sorry, but I have sad news."

"What has happened?" Uncle Ston pa said.

"The donkey died," Rin chen said.

"Well, just give me my money back," said Uncle Ston pa.

"I can't. I've already spent it all," replied Rin chen.

"OK. Just bring the dead donkey over," said Uncle Ston pa.

"What are you going to do with the dead donkey?" asked Rin chen.

"I'm going to sell lottery tickets with the donkey as the prize," replied Uncle Ston pa.

"You can't raffle off a dead donkey!" exclaimed Rin chen.

"Just watch me. I won't tell anyone the donkey is dead," said Uncle Ston pa.

Rin chen and two of his sons then put the dead donkey in a cart, pulled it over to Uncle Ston pa's home, and dumped it in his orchard.

A month later, Rin chen met Uncle Ston pa in the local market and asked, "What happened with that dead donkey?"

"I sold 500 tickets at three *yuan* each. I made a profit of 1,397 *yuan*," said Uncle Ston pa.

"Didn't anyone complain?" inquired Rin chen

"Just the man who won so I gave him his three *yuan* back," said Uncle Ston pa.

Rgod po ltag khra. 2017. The Lottery. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:199-200.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

rgod po ltag khra 藏文

rin chen 禮

ston pa 貢

yuan 元

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TSHE DBANG RDO RJE'S COLLECTION

INTRODUCTION

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

While I (b. 1980) was a child, living in Ne'u na (Sne na, Nina) Village, Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, I heard many stories from my grandfather, Rdo dpa' (1918-1996). I was told to call him Abu¹ 'Grandfather' in the local A mdo Tibetan dialect. Many villagers called him Abu Rdo dpa'. Locals said he was good at many things aside from telling stories and singing folksongs. He was known as the toughest man in the village because he had escaped from Ma Bufang's army three times. He could hide and live alone in the mountains for years. He was also the best swimmer. He could hide from enemies in the Yellow River for hours and steered rafts with heavy goods, even when water reached above his knees in the rushing current. Moreover, he was known as a sharpshooter because he could shoot down flying eagles with an old firelock that he cleaned almost every day until his death.

I was very lucky to have been born in Abu's home where, from the 1980s until I left home for schooling in Zi ling (Xining) in 1998, I heard many stories about ghosts, Uncle Ston pa (Donba, Tonpa), and Abu himself. In September 1987 and July 1991 Abu told me the Uncle Ston pa stories I present here. My older brother retold some of the stories in July 1998 and at other times in my life.

Tshe dbang rdo rje. 2017. Introduction. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:202-216.

¹ Abu is a colloquial term used in certain Tibetan villages. To my knowledge, there is no accepted literary term. Those knowledgeable in literary Tibetan whom I consulted suggested *pa po*, which is colloquial and common in A mdo Tibetan, but it is pronounced quite differently than *abu*. Another suggestion was that I use *a po*, but this term means 'baby' in my local dialect. For these reasons I use *abu*.

STORIES FROM ABU IN 1987

On 2 September 1987, I heard many stories from Abu. Let me give you some background...

It was a wet, cloudy morning with fine drizzling rain. Father gobbled down two big bowls of hot noodles, looked at the sky through the skylight, and announced, "Raining! The fields can't be plowed today." Then he stood up, put on his dark, blue-patched coat that he had been wearing ever since I could remember, and started to leave.

"Going to Hezuoshe¹ again!?" asked Mother.

"Yeah, nothing can be done on this rainy day! So..." replied Father.

"Then don't forget to buy salt. We've only had raw salt for months," said Mother.

"We don't have any money!" Father replied as he walked out of the kitchen. "There is still more than a half-sack of raw salt that I got from Caka.² We can use it for a few more years!" As soon as I learned that Father was going to Hezuoshe, I put down my unfinished bowl of hot noodles and ran after him. I loved that place because there were many goods and local village children gathered there.

"Stay at home with Mother," said Father as soon as I got near him. But I didn't go back and followed him from a distance. After I had followed him for a few minutes along a muddy path, Father finally waited for me and carried me on his back to Hezuoshe.

Most of the village men and many children were in Hezuoshe when we arrived. The village men - mostly fathers - were chatting, joking, laughing, and sipping and passing around a bottle of Golden-

¹ Hezuoshe is a Chinese term that refers to the only shop in the village that was run by local people in 1987. It translates as 'cooperative agency/society' and is Mnyam las khang in Tibetan. Both Tibetan and Chinese locals use the term "Hezuoshe."

² Caka is the local name used by both Tibetan and Chinese locals for Caka Salt Lake, located in Chaka Town, Wulan County, Mtsho shar (Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, PR China. It is "Chaka" in Chinese and "Tshwa kha" in Tibetan.

Stupa Liquor.¹ They were also sharing a Mango cigarette.² Some fathers held their babies in one arm while drinking and smoking. Most children under five sat in their father's lap. Older ones chased each other, fighting and crying. Some children also played games such as *doko*,³ *pardo*,⁴ *dolav*,⁵ and *thejol*.⁶

Father joined the village men's circle, sat on the ground cross-legged, and started smoking, drinking, and chatting. I looked around and didn't see my best playmate, Bkra shis 'bum (1981-1998, who was

¹ Jintajiu 'Golden-Stupa Liquor' was a local barley liquor made near Sku 'bum Monastery in the 1980s.

² For background on how China came to worship the mango during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), see Malcolm Moore (<http://googl/WKM7Dm>, accessed 4 November 2016).

³ *Doko* 'stone hole' is a colloquial Tibetan name for the game. It was often played by boys. We dug three holes. Each player threw a ball into the holes in turn. Whoever finished one round could kill others by hitting their balls with their own ball. Children of poor families often make their own balls with wood or stone, while rich family children bought metal or glass balls from Hezuoshe.

⁴ *Pardo* 'the other side stone' is a colloquial Tibetan name for a game that was often played by boys. It was also called *ardo* 'noisy stone' because we made a lot of loud, excited sounds such as "Ah!" when we were playing. We played the game by setting up a big flat, face-size stone five to seven meters away, and trying to hit the big stone with a small fist-sized stone in easy to difficult ways, such as using the right hand, left hand, right foot, left foot, and throwing the small stone between our legs, overhead, and trying to hit the big stone without looking at it.

⁵ *Dolav* 'flat stone' is a colloquial Tibetan name for a game girls often played by drawing six connected squares in a "T" shape, or drawing eight connected squares that formed a 干 shape. We passed a small flat, fist-size stone using both feet and then using one foot from the bottom first square to the top squares without repeating any adjacent squares. Whoever finished one round won the game and scored a point. At the same time, the winner had to pass the stone in more challenging ways to earn more points, such as passing the stone with one foot on one leg and skipping through the odd numbered squares.

⁶ *Thejol* is a colloquial Tibetan name for a shuttlecock game, which was often played by girls in my village. The shuttlecocks that we had were often made of goat or pig hair stuck into the mouth of an air cock from discarded bicycle or cart tires. Children from rich families had shuttlecocks with copper coins.

also my cousin. He was a month younger than me. So, I just sat in Father's lap as usual, enjoying the fragrance in the air from the liquor and the cigarette being passed around.

Having soon finished the bottle of liquor some elders started teasing some younger men to buy another bottle. When Father was teased to buy more liquor, I declared "We don't have money!" in the angry tone Father often used with us.

Everybody laughed and Father blushed. He picked me up, spanked my buttocks, and told me to go out to play with the other children. I knew he was unhappy, so I obeyed. I went out, but I didn't play with the children because none were my age. Instead, I went straight to Bkra shis 'bum's home, which was near Hezuoshe.

I didn't dare enter the gate of Bkra shis 'bum's house because I knew there was a ferocious black dog chained near the gate. I called to Bkra shis 'bum and the dog started barking. Soon Bkra shis 'bum's father came out.

"Oh, you came! Come, come. Don't be afraid. I'll hold the dog," he reassured me. While I was passing the furiously barking dog, he asked where my father was.

"At Hezuoshe," I replied.

"I see. Bkra shis 'bum is in the bedroom. You two play, but don't fight!" he cautioned and then left.

Running to the bedroom I found Bkra shis 'bum holding an old green army bag decorated with a red star in front as his mother patched the bag's worn-out holes.

"My school bag!" exclaimed Bkra shis 'bum excitedly as soon as he saw me.

"School bag?" I queried.

"Yes, school bag!" replied Bkra shis 'bum in excitement. "I'm going to school tomorrow!"

"Oh! To do what?" I asked.

"I don't know," said Bkra shis 'bum.

"You're going to study!" announced his mother.

"Study?" asked Bkra shis 'bum.

"Learn how to write your name," replied his mother while smiling and putting her hand gently on his head.

"Why?" I asked.

She smiled at me and said, "So he won't get hungry."

"Oh, then I also want to go to school," I said.

"Good! Tell your mother," she advised.

She soon finished patching the bag and gave it to Bkra shis 'bum, who clutched it and dashed out of the room excitedly. I chased him. Before he reached the gate, I grabbed the bag and he fell on his back in the mud. For a moment, he made no noise. I didn't know what to do, but as soon as I saw his mother running towards us from the kitchen, I dashed toward Hezuoshe because I was afraid she would scold and beat me.

"Apa..."¹ I called to Father and looked around for him as soon as I entered Hezuoshe.

"Hi, boy! Your father went home with your uncle," said the village leader, Ban de rgyal. Then I ran home falling many times on the muddy path.

"A ma... A ma 'Mother... Mother!"² I called as soon as I entered our home compound gate and then ran to the kitchen.

Mother was sitting on a small wooden stool washing potatoes in the rusty helmet that my elder brother had found when he was looking for our family mule in fields near the military base, Dmag chang.³ I jumped on her back and put my arms around her neck.

¹ Apa 'father' in the local Tibetan dialect is *a pha* in literary Tibetan. I called Father "Apa" without knowing his real name until the age of eight when I went to school to register.

² Ama 'mother'.

³ Dmag chang was the military base, located east of our village. This is a combination of the Tibetan word *dmag* 'army'/'military' and the Chinese *chang* 'area'/'base'. Dmag chang was a mysterious place for us, because it was surrounded by high adobe walls and we were forbidden to get near or enter. My childhood playmates and I often went into Dmag chang fields to herd sheep, goats, and donkeys, and to steal fruits and vegetables that our families lacked. Mother once carried me inside Dmag chang on her back to get intramuscular injections when I had pneumonia, from which I almost

"Oh! You're getting heavy!" said Mother gently, "Get off... get off!"

"Mother?" I said, putting my face on her head, "Bkra shis 'bum is going to school."

"Oh," said Mother.

"I also want to go," I said.

Mother stopped washing the potatoes, gently lifted me up by my arms, and put me on her lap. I automatically tried to nurse her so she sent me off to tell my father about my desire for schooling.

"Where is Father?" I asked.

"In the west room," replied Mother and started chopping the washed potatoes.

"Apa! Apa!" I called, while running to the west room. I flung open the door with a "bang!"

Father was holding a half bottle of Golden-Stupa Liquor, which he had bought on credit from Hezuoshe. He had saved it for a few months. He was pouring liquor into the bottle lid on the table. The bang of the door opening startled Father. He spilled a mouthful of liquor onto the table. He immediately put down the bottle, scraped the spilled liquor into his left palm with his right hand, and sipped it. He glared at me and yelled, "Bastard! Can't you open the door gently!"

I thought of running away, but I did not because I knew Father rarely beat me when guests were present.

"Awu,¹ ignore it. Let's play now," said Bkra shis 'bum's father.

Father swallowed his anger and started playing the local drinking game loudly with Bkra shis 'bum's father. After playing a few

died at the age of six. At that time, I saw many interesting, unusual things, such as rows of red-tiled roofed-rooms, blue army tents, trucks, and many soldiers and wolfhounds. According to Grandfather, Dmag chang was built east of our village in the 1950s because some locals were wild and aggressive. It became Ninaxincun (New Nina Village) when a few groups of Hui families migrated there in the late 1990s.

¹ Awu 'elder brother' in local Tibetan is *phu bo* in literary Tibetan.

rounds, I thought Father was not angry any more. I sneaked behind him and said, "Apa...?"

"What?" asked Father.

"I want to go to school," I declared.

Father ignored me and kept playing. I hit Father's back with my head and repeated more loudly, "I want to go to school."

"Go help your mother," he said and resumed playing the drinking game.

I continued hitting Father's back with my head while chanting "I want to go to school." After a minute, Father pushed me off yelling "Get out! I've no money to send you to school!"

I went to the door but I didn't leave. Instead, I kept chanting "I want to go to school..." while hitting the door against the wall.

Suddenly, Father took off one of his shoes, threw it at me, and yelled, "Get out!"

I turned back fearfully, covering my head with one arm. I tried to run out, but the shoe hit my buttocks hard. I screamed from the pain, and ran out. When I looked back, I saw Mother laughing as Father picked up his shoe.

Father said, "Bastard! I'll beat you to death when I catch you!"

When I saw Father pointing at me with a trembling hand and walking toward me, I turned and started running. I decided to go to Abu for protection. I ran about one kilometer to where Abu was living with my elder brother, Tshe dba', in a small adobe cottage they stayed in to herd sheep and goats in an area called Bkra zhing kha 'Beautiful Farming Land'. It was almost noon when I reached Bkra zhing kha. I could smell boiling meat and hear Abu singing in the distance. I cried loudly as soon as I saw Abu lying on the adobe bed, teaching a folksong to my elder brother, who was imitating Abu quietly, while scooping boiled pigeon meat onto a plate.

Abu quickly stood up, enfolded me in his warm arms, and asked, "Oh, Lolo,¹ don't cry! What's wrong?"

¹ Lolo is a local Tibetan name used for lovely babies. Grandfather called me "Lolo" until he passed away.

"Father..." I started and then couldn't stop crying, "...beat me when I said I wanted to go to school!"

Abu comforted me, rubbing my head gently, showing me a nipple-sized fleshy growth on his left arm to distract me, and telling me some Uncle Ston pa stories that I have retold in this book.

I only stopped weeping and started eating when Abu told me that he would give me money for schooling by taking me to town to sell a fine wildcat skin that he had gotten by hunting with his firelock a month earlier. For both lunch and supper, we had dry crunchy bread with pigeon meat and soup. Early the next morning, we had the same food - reheated leftover pigeon with dry bread. Abu told Elder Brother to herd the sheep and goats and to be sure to take the firelock. Elder Brother happily took the firelock, which was almost as tall as he was, and followed the flocks of sheep and goats while singing the folksong he had learned from Abu. Abu and I then started to Hexi Town, which was about thirteen kilometers from our village.

We reached the central garden of the town around noon and then rested. A Muslim man with a long white-beard came and talked to us. Abu then sold the wildcat skin for eight RMB plus a big bowl of *santuk*.¹ The Muslim man owned a nearby noodle restaurant.

Abu and I were very happy as we gobbled down the big bowl of noodles and took the eight RMB. On the way back, Abu told me many interesting stories, some of which I tell in this book.

Early the next morning (3 September 1987), Abu gave me 2.5 RMB, which I gave to our village school teacher, Mr. Zhang. I thus started my school life.

•••

On 5 August 1988, I heard Abu's funny stories from Tshe dba', with whom I had a remarkable time with five *yuan*. It was during the Sixth

¹ *Santuk* is a local Tibetan name for hand-pulled noodles (*mianpian*). *San* denotes *sen mo* 'nail' and *tuk/thug pa* is "noodles" in literary Tibetan. My family often cooked *santuk* by boiling many small pieces of fingernail-sized dough made of wheat flour and warm salty water in a pot.

Lunar Month Deity Festival,¹ which is the most famous and popular festival in Khri ka County.

On the evening of that day, Elder Brother and I put all our sheep into a pen, said goodbye to Abu, ran home, and rushed into the kitchen in great excitement. "Mother! Father! Many trucks have come to our village. They're waiting for villagers to go to tomorrow's Deity Festival," I gushed. "What time will we leave tomorrow?"

Mother stopped cutting noodles and turned to Father, who was sitting on the adobe bed. He raised his brown face and said, "We are not going to the festival."

Father's sentence extinguished the fire of excitement burning deep in our hearts. Brother never begged my parents twice. He stood as motionless as a puppet by the door with his right thumb in his mouth. I threw my head against Mother's chest, beat her arms with my fists, and bawled, "Why? Mother, I will go..."

"Oh, hush my darling," said Mother.

"Don't cry, the festival lasts five days!" Father bellowed impatiently. "We can go to the festival after your Mother and I harvest the wheat."

I didn't listen to anything my parents said. I just cried and cried. Suddenly Father got off the bed, took off one shoe, and spanked my buttocks very hard. It was so painful that I wailed even louder. He tried to spank me again, but Mother stopped him. He sat back on the bed very angrily.

At supper, Mother and Brother urged me to eat noodles, but I ate nothing. I continued sobbing until Father put five *yuan* in my pocket, dried my eyes and cheeks with his big warm hands, and said, "Don't cry my dear. Crying is bad for your eyes. This five *yuan* is for you and your brother to go to tomorrow's festival. Forgive me, I don't have more money to give you. I must prepare twenty *yuan* for you and your brother's school fees before next month. But I do have two nice hats. If you like, please wear them tomorrow." Then he put one hand very kindly on my brother's shoulder and said with a big smile,

¹ Drug pa'i lha rtse in Tibetan and Liuyuehui in Chinese.

"You must take care of your little brother tomorrow. Your mother will herd the sheep and I have to harvest the wheat, so we can't go with you."

Brother nodded yes.

I was so happy and excited that night, imagining what I would see the next day - many nice cars, animals, and colorful clothes - that I didn't sleep until midnight.

The next morning, Brother and I got up at four o'clock. Mother put four pieces of bread in our pockets. Father asked us to wear the nice hats that he had stored in his cupboard for twenty years. They were worn only during Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year'. Brother wore the blue one. Although mine was too big for my small head I still wore it. Then we started walking. The Sixth Lunar Month Deity Festival Ground was about eighteen kilometers from my village. Nobody was up so early and nobody saw us, so Brother and I played catch on the road and in the high wheat fields, jumped over walls, climbed fruit trees, ate various fruit, and shared stories that we had heard from Abu. We had a lot of fun.

When daylight came, an ever-increasing number of trucks filled with people passed us on the small dusty road. Several drivers stopped and asked us to get on for one *yuan*, but we refused because we enjoyed walking and we knew we had already come most of the way and would reach the Sixth Lunar Month Deity Festival Ground soon.

We arrived around nine AM. Hundreds of cars, trucks, motorcycles, carts, and horses lined the sides of the road. Many guards were watching them. It seemed all the world's people had come to that place. People from everywhere crowded the road. Many children and their relatives shouted to each other. They had lost each other in the throng. Brother held my hand tightly for almost the whole day. On either side of the Sixth Lunar Month Deity Festival Ground's gate, there were a huge number of traders from Zi ling, the Tibet Autonomous Region, Sichuan, and Shanghai selling Tibetan robes, incense, leather boots, tea, VCD players, radios, and TVs.

Inside the Sixth Lunar Month Deity Festival Ground, many Chinese troupes were performing excellent acrobatic shows in huge tents. Many Tibetan and Qinghai Chinese singers were singing melodious traditional folk songs. Numerous tents were showing movies.

Brother and I just looked. We touched and asked the price of the many attractive toys such as cars, trains, robots, and sheep on display. On that day, it seemed the sun would burn us and we were both almost dead from thirst. We went to every part of the Sixth Lunar Month Deity Festival Ground trying to find water, but we could not. Many people were drinking bottles of bubbly, colored liquid. We saw such drinks being sold in many shops. Brother bought one bottle for one *yuan*. It tasted terrible, but we finished it in a minute.

After a while, we both felt odd. Brother's face turned red and I felt very tired and could hardly walk. Brother looked at me and laughed. We both felt uncomfortable and sleepy. We left the festival ground and walked unsteadily into a deep forested area, where there were very few people. I lay on the ground by a tree while Brother lay near me after throwing the empty bottle into the distance.

Suddenly, he thumped me with his elbow and whispered, "Look, look."

I mumbled, "No, no, no..., stop bothering me," and then I turned my head and tried to sleep again, but I couldn't. I had a headache and was very hungry. Brother noticed I was not well, helped me get up, and suggested we eat something.

We returned to the festival ground and went to a restaurant near the gate where we ordered two big bowls of noodles for a total of 2.6 *yuan*. They were delicious. We finished the noodles ravenously. I had never had such delicious noodles in my life. After polishing off the last of the soup we felt much better.

"Would you like to stay here tonight?" Brother asked.

"Yes," I said, hopping in front of him joyfully.

"We have only 1.4 *yuan*. It's not enough for a meal. Mother and Father will worry if we don't come home tonight," he said.

I scratched my head and suggested, "We can go home very early tomorrow morning without breakfast."

He smiled and agreed, "OK, where should we go now?"

Nearby, I saw a VCD room. The proprietor was shouting in Chinese that for five *jiao*¹ you could stay the whole night. "Let's go watch movies. We can sleep there if we feel sleepy," I said.

Brother's Qinghai Chinese was better than mine at that time and he tried his best to ask the owner to let us watch the movie. He showed four *jiao* to the owner and pointed to himself and me. He spoke half in Tibetan and half in Qinghai dialect.

The owner thought for a bit and then said, "OK, OK," in Chinese. Then we both went inside and sat on one chair. A Chinese martial arts movie was playing when we first entered. I couldn't understand the dialogue well, but the movie was exciting with fantastic effects like people flying in the sky and huge rocks exploding without being touched. I was totally engrossed the whole time.

After two movies, the proprietor spoke to the audience and everyone left except Brother and me. Then he spoke Chinese and gestured. I understood that we should pay two more *yuan* for something. After a long explanation and more gestures, the owner indicated sleeping and two *yuan*. We understood. Brother and I took out all the money from our shirt pockets. There was only one *yuan*. The owner talked to his friend, who nodded his head. Unfortunately, a brown-haired Chinese man came inside with a woman who had her arm around his neck. He said something to the proprietor, put ten *yuan* on the table, and began to kiss the lady on the sofa. Then the proprietor came to us, pulled us both out of the room, and shook his hands to show we should leave.

Actually, we were not disappointed. We saw several old Tibetans sleeping in their leather robes on the performance platform and joined them. Brother found paper boxes in the garbage, flattened them on the platform and covered us with some. I had never had such a bed before. It was so comfortable, soft, and warm that I fell asleep

¹ Five *jiao* equals 0.5 *yuan*, which was about 0.06 USD at that time.

before Brother finished telling one of the stories presented in this book.

I didn't wake up until Brother nudged me. Getting up I saw that the sun was about as high as a person above the tip of the east mountain. Brother told me to collect empty beer bottles from the garbage. He explained he had seen an old man pick up the empty bottle that we had thrown away the day before and sell it for five *fen* to a bottle collector. "We can have two bowls of noodles for breakfast if we collect fifty empty bottles," he said.

I was very excited. Within an hour, we had collected a big paper box of empty bottles, which we sold for 2.5 *yuan*. We then had 3.5 *yuan*. We were so happy that we could barely control ourselves. We went to the same restaurant that we had eaten at the day before, enjoyed another kind of delicious noodles, bought a bottle of beer, and then went back home by truck at noon.

Back home I told the entire story to my parents. After we finished describing our wonderful times, Father said, "I am very happy you both came back safely and that you had a good time, but listen to me and don't drink beer again. It's not a good thing."

We both seriously said, "We will listen to you and we will never forget, Father."

My parents were very happy with that and Mother tried to cook the same noodles that we had in the restaurant. I never drank beer again.

•••

On 1 July 1991, I took the Grade Four Primary School Entrance Examination. It was very important because it determined if village children could enter higher-level schools. Our village school had only grades one to three. The exam had Tibetan language, Chinese language, and math sections. I failed because my Chinese language test score was low.

More than half of my classmates did not pass. I was embarrassed but not sad, until I saw some of my playmates preparing for school in August. In September 1991, many playmates went to

schools. I was left lonely and sad and then went with Abu to herd sheep. He told me Uncle Ston pa stories to cheer me up.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a khu ston pa ང་ནුෂ්ක རා

a ma ང་ම

a mdo ང་මද

a b+ho [ʌ'bu] ང་ඡ

Aku Jaku, a khu spyang ki ང་නුෂ්ක དි

apa, a pha ང་ພ

awu, phu bo ང་වු

ban de rgyal ལඛ དේ རු

bkra shis 'bum ལු ප් රු ම

bkra zhing kha ལු ති ද ම

Caixiangduojie 才项多杰

Chaka 茶卡

dmag khrang ད ພ ອ ຮ ກ

dngul sdong ད ນ ລ ສ ດ ວ

doko, rdo rko ད ອ ອ

dolav, rdo leb ད ອ ລ ບ

drug pa'i lha rtse ད ຖ ພ ຩ ຊ ຕ

Duanwujie 端午节

Duohua 多华

fen 分

Guide 贵德

Hainan 海南

Haixi 海西

Hezuoshe 合作社

Hui 回

jiao 角

Jintajiu 金塔酒

khri ka ຂ ຮ ອ

Liuyuehui 六月会

lo sar ལྠସା

Ma Bufang 马步芳

mianpian 面片

mnyam las khang མ྘ྱାମ བାଙ୍ଗ

mtsho lho མྲୋ ར୍ହୋ

mtsho shar མྲୋ ར୍ହା

mtsho sngon མྲୋ ར୍ହୋ

ne'u na ན୍ନୋ ཉନ୍ନା

Nina 尼那

Ninaxincun 尼那新村

pa po ད୍ପା ཚୋ, pha b+ho ད୍ପା ཚୋ

pardo, phar rdo ད୍ପା ཚୋ (also ardo, 'ar rdo/ ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ)

Qinghai 青海

rdo dpa' ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

santuk, sen thug ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

Shanghai 上海

shazaoshu 沙枣树

Sichuan 四川

skra ston ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

sku 'bum ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

sne na ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

ston pa ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

thejol, 'thu sgro ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

tshe dbang rdo rje ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

tshe dpa' ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

tshwa kha ཁ୍ପା ཚୋ

Wulan 乌兰

Xining 西宁

yeye 爷爷

yuan 元

Zhang 张

zi ling ག୍ରୀ ག୍ରୀ

THE LANDLORD CUTS DOWN A TREE

Tshe dbang rdo rje 財項多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

Uncle Ston pa was a young man who lived in a shanty near a landlord's big orchard. These trees included a big *dngul sdong*¹ that shaded Uncle Ston pa's house from morning till evening. Uncle Ston pa was so unhappy about this that he devised a clever plan.

One afternoon, Uncle Ston pa carried a few bundles of *dngul sdong* branches as the landlord was walking around the orchard. The landlord saw Uncle Ston pa and asked, "Where are you going with those branches?"

"I'm going to sell them in town," said Uncle Ston pa.

"Who'll buy them?" asked the landlord.

"A Chinese merchant. This morning, I saw him paying a high price for *dngul sdong*. He told me that he wouldn't be in town for very long, so I've got to hurry!" Uncle Ston pa lied.

The landlord thought, "I have a big useless *dngul sdong* in this orchard. Why don't I sell it and make some money?!"

"Ston pa, wait for me," said the landlord. "I'll sell my big *dngul sdong* tree to the Chinese merchant."

"Oh, you'll make a lot of money with that big *dngul sdong*," said Uncle Ston pa. "But you've got to act quickly! The merchant won't stay in town for long."

The landlord called several of his servants to cut down the big *dngul sdong*. Then Uncle Ston pa, the landlord, and the servants started off for town - all with *dngul sdong* on their backs. However,

Tshe dbang rdo rje. 2017. The Landlord Cuts Down a Tree. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:217-218.

¹ The *dngul sdong* 'silver tree' is similar to the desert date. These trees have silver-colored leaves and yellow, strong-smelling flowers. Locals often break off branches and bring them inside their homes for decoration and purification in the fifth lunar month, especially on the fifth day, which is Dragon Boat Festival, which is called Vavare in the local Tibetan dialect and Duanwujie in Chinese.

the *dngul sdong* was heavy and they didn't reach town until sunset. By this time, there were few people in the streets and they couldn't find the merchant.

The landlord scolded Uncle Ston pa, "Liar! Where is the Chinese merchant?!"

"He must have left. I told you he wouldn't be in the town for long!" Uncle Ston pa said.

The landlord and his men were exhausted from carrying the heavy *dngul sdong* so they left it in the street and returned home.

The next morning, Uncle Ston pa's house was comfortable and bright with warm sunshine.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

dngul sdung དངུལ་ສདོང་

Duanwujie 端午节

ston pa ཆོන་པ་

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲହ୍ମଦୁର୍ଗ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

vavare, ba ba re ບ້າບ້າຮ່າ

THE LANDLORD KILLS A PIG

Tshe dbang rdo rje བྲྱତ୍ୱ ར୍ଦୋ ຮ୍ଜେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

After Uncle Ston pa tricked his landlord into cutting down the *dbung sdong* tree, he was assigned difficult tasks. For a week, the landlord asked Uncle Ston pa to feed a pig and clean its pigsty. Uncle Ston pa got very upset with such work and devised an ingenious plan to get rid of the pig.

One afternoon while feeding the pig, Uncle Ston pa noticed the landlord riding his strong stallion from place to place, checking his servants' work. When the landlord approached the pigsty, Uncle Ston pa gave one of the pig ears a vicious pinch, causing it to give a high-pitched, very loud squeal. This so frightened the landlord's stallion that it reared up, sending the landlord tumbling to the ground.

When the furious landlord regained his footing on trembling legs, he shouted, "Who scared my horse? I'll kill you!"

Uncle Ston pa pointed at the pig and said, "This pig did it. Do you want us to kill it?"

"Yes! Do it now!" commanded the landlord.

Uncle Ston pa and other servants who had gathered, immediately stoned the pig to death. From that day on, Uncle Ston pa didn't have to feed the pig and clean the pigsty.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

dbung sdung ད୍ୡଙ୍ଗ ཟୁଂ

ston pa ལୁଟ୍ଟା

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲྱତ୍ୱ ར୍ଦୋ ຮ୍ଜେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

THE LANDLORD COOKS THE PORK

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

After killing the pig, Uncle Ston pa and other servants were eager to cook and eat the pork for supper. When they asked the landlord what he wanted them to do with the dead pig, he told them to sell the pork in town. Uncle Ston pa devised a shrewd plan to ensure that the servants would be able to eat the pork.

The pig had been stoned to death so its meat was spotted with bruises and wounds. When they got to the town with the pig carcass, Uncle Ston pa told the servants to shout, "Buy dead spotted pork! Buy dead spotted pork!" When potential buyers took note of this, they guessed that the pig had died of illness and told their friends and family members to keep far away from the dead pig. No one then came to buy the pork.

Uncle Ston pa and his friends returned to the landlord with the pig carcass. Uncle Ston pa said, "My dear landlord, because of the bruises on the carcass, we couldn't sell any pork at all. What should we do with the carcass?"

The landlord thought for a moment and finally said, "Cook half of it for supper. My family members will eat the meat. You servants can have the soup!"

Unhappy with that, Uncle Ston pa then told his friends to boil the pork for a long time. Once the fat and flesh were dissolved in the soup, they enjoyed rich, tasty soup. When they finished the soup, they handed the bones and skin to the landlord. Uncle Ston pa said, "My dear landlord, we didn't know how to cook the pork well. Here are what remains - only bones and skin for your family members."

"Then, bring me the soup!" ordered the landlord.

"Sorry, my dear landlord! You said we could have the soup and we have just finished it for our supper," said Uncle Ston pa.

"OK, then tomorrow you and the other servants eat the meat and bring the soup to me," commanded the landlord.

The next day, Uncle Ston pa and his friends took out the meat from the water as soon as it was cooked. They offered the landlord the flavorless, watery soup and gobbled down the pork.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa རྩଣ୍ପ

tshe dbang rdo rje ཁྲ୍ୱଣ୍ଡଙ୍ଗଦୁଓଜୀ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE LANDLORD'S WIFE

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

After tricking the landlord a few times, the news spread among servants. They then all knew Uncle Ston pa. One day, the landlord's wife also heard this news. Unhappy to hear about her husband being humiliated, she was eager to take revenge. She put on her best robe and rode her best stallion to meet Uncle Ston pa, whom she found washing his dirty clothes by a village stream. As soon as she saw Uncle Ston pa, she yelled, "Hey, you! You have become famous by tricking my husband. Now trick me. Display your skills or I'll tell all my servants that you're a stupid, incapable man!"

Ston pa thought for a moment and replied, "Oh, my dear landlord. How can I trick you? I forgot my book of tricks at home. If you really want me to trick you, I must borrow your stallion to get my book of tricks first."

"Ha! You have a trick book?!" the landlord's wife laughed and then said, "Sure. Here's my stallion. I want to see you trick me today!"

Uncle Ston pa took the stallion and then said, "Also, my dear landlord! I need to borrow your nice robe or your stallion will sense I'm a stranger and won't let me ride him."

The landlord's wife took off her robe, threw it to Uncle Ston pa, and said, "Here you go. Be quick! I can't wait to see your book of tricks."

Uncle Ston pa put on the robe, jumped on the stallion, and galloped across the stream. When he got to the other side he yelled, "My dear landlord, see how I tricked you today!"

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa སྟོན་པ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲହ୍ମବନ୍ଧୁ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE LANDLORD'S DAUGHTER

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

After tricking the landlord's wife, Uncle Ston pa was given even more difficult tasks to do. One day, the landlord and his wife had to go to other villages to invite their best friends and relatives for their daughter's *skra ston* 'hair changing ritual'¹ that would be held in a week. They called Uncle Ston pa to their daughter's room and told her to keep an eye on Uncle Ston pa. Before they left, the landlord said to his daughter, Lha mo, "Sweetie, today Ston pa is your servant. Order him to do whatever you like! But remember, don't let him out of your sight!"

"Thank you, Father. I'll keep him in my room and make sure he cleans every corner and does whatever I tell him," responded Lha mo in glee. Immediately, she threw her foot towel to Uncle Ston pa, ordered him to kneel, and then told him to scrub the floor. When Uncle Ston pa knelt and started scrubbing the floor, Lha mo jumped on his back, whipped him like a horse, and said, "Faster! Faster! Faster!"

Seeing how Lha mo was maltreating Uncle Ston pa, the landlord and his wife left in delight. Meanwhile, Uncle Ston pa was very upset and devised a clever plan to take revenge.

After some time, Lha mo, jumped off Uncle Ston pa, and started to leave the room. Uncle Ston pa asked, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going out to pee," said Lha mo.

"Didn't your father tell you not to let me out of your sight?" said Uncle Ston pa.

"Yes, you're right," said Lha mo, "but I need to pee now and my parents won't be back soon. What should I do?"

Tshe dbang rdo rje. 2017. Tricking the Landlord's Daughter. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 47:224-225.

¹ A coming-of-age ritual held locally for teenage girls.

"How about I take your pee and then I'll go pee when your parents arrive?" suggested Ston pa.

"Excellent! But how can we do that?" said Lha mo.

"It's easy. We'll both take off our pants and then you ride on my belly while jumping up and down. It's more exciting than riding on my back," Uncle Ston pa instructed.

"That sounds wonderful! Let's do it now!" Lha mo said in excitement, and then pulled off her pants.

Ston pa took off his pants, lay on his back, and covered his hard penis with both hands. Lha mo straddled Uncle Ston pa's groin, and started bouncing up and down. An instant later, as Lha mo raised her buttocks during one of her bounces, Uncle Ston pa uncovered his hard penis, which pierced right into Lha mo when she flopped her buttocks against him. Lha mo felt sudden pain and tried to stop, but Ston pa told her that this was the way for him to extract her pee. She then kept bouncing up and down until she climaxed.

Afterwards, Lha mo often asked her parents to order Uncle Ston pa to serve her. Consequently, Ston pa had a wonderful time regularly taking Lha mo's pee until the day Lha mo told her best friend what she and Uncle Ston pa were doing.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

lha mo ལྷ །

ston pa ཟ །

tshe dbang rdo rje བ ད ར ཉ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE LANDLORD'S DAUGHTER AGAIN

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

One afternoon, Lha mo's best friend, Sgrol ma, came to visit. It was right after Uncle Ston pa left Lha mo's room after "taking her pee." Seeing that Lha mo looked very tired, Sgrol ma asked, "Are you OK? You look exhausted!"

"Yeah, I'm OK. I just let Ston pa take my pee," replied Lha mo.

"What! How did Ston pa take your pee?" asked Sgrol ma in puzzlement.

After Lha mo explained, Sgrol ma said in astonishment, "Oh, no!"

"What's wrong?" asked Lha mo.

"He tricked you! He didn't take your pee!" said Sgrol ma, "He..."

Before Sgrol ma finished her sentence, Lha mo dashed to Uncle Ston pa's dilapidated room and said furiously, "You liar! You didn't take my pee!"

Seeing Lha mo's furious face, Uncle Ston pa was scared to death. He thought, "Now I'm in big trouble! I hope she doesn't tell our secret to her parents. Otherwise, they'll kill me."

"Don't you dare not take my pee this time!" screeched Lha mo.

Uncle Ston pa's fear vanished when he heard this. He took off his hat, bowed to Lha mo, and said "Oh, Princess, please forgive me! I'll surely take your pee this time to make you happy. But you shouldn't tell anyone about this!"

"Sure, I won't tell anyone if you really take my pee this time, but how are you really going to take my pee?" asked Lha mo.

"It's not difficult. You just have to take off your pants and lie down on your back as I did before," said Uncle Ston pa.

"That's easy!" said Lha mo. She jerked off her pants, and lay down on her back with her hands covering her groin.

Uncle Ston pa immediately took off his pants, went over, straddled Lha mo, and started bouncing up and down as fast as he could with his penis in Lha mo's vagina. It didn't take much time for Lha mo to cry out, "I peed! I peed!"

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

lha mo ལྷ ༡

sgrol ma སྒྲୋ ༡

ston pa ཟୋ ༡

tshe dbang rdo rje བୋ རୋ ར୍ଜେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE LANDLORD'S FRIEND

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

One evening, when Lha mo's mother was walking to the toilet, she passed by Lha mo's room and heard strange panting sounds. Using a butter lamp, she opened the door and walked toward the sounds, and was shocked to see a naked man bouncing up and down on Lha mo. She was so startled that the butter lamp flew into the air as she squealed, "Help! Help! A thief is in my daughter's room!"

Uncle Ston pa was terrified by this sudden intrusion, grabbed the nearest robe, which was Lha mo's, dashed out of the window, and ran with all his might, leaving the landlord's home far behind.

After a few minutes, Lha mo's father arrived in the room with several of his loyal servants and anxiously inquired, "What's wrong?"

Lha mo's mother didn't know what to say and thought, "It will humiliate our daughter and our family if they know the truth." She said, "A thief stole our daughter's robe! Catch him!"

"Did you see the thief's face? Is it a man or woman?" asked Lha mo's father.

"I didn't see the thief's face clearly, but I'm sure it's a man. I saw his oily penis in the moonlight when he was jumping out the window," replied Lha mo's mother.

"Go and catch that man with an oily penis who's wearing my daughter's robe!" angrily commanded Lha mo's father.

His loyal servants immediately mounted horses and galloped in all four directions, intent on catching the thief with an oily-penis. They couldn't catch Uncle Ston pa at night because of darkness but, as soon as daylight came, it didn't take much time to track Uncle Ston pa, following his footprints. When they got close, Uncle Ston pa met his landlord's friend, Tshe ring, who was a young merchant, selling flour and oil.

Tshe ring asked in surprise, "Where are you going in such as hurry? Why are you wearing a woman's robe?"

"Oh, my dear Tshe ring. How nice to see you! I was actually coming to meet you to give you this nice robe," replied Uncle Ston pa, breathing hard.

"Why do you want to give me this robe?" asked Tshe ring in astonishment.

"Oh, no! Don't tell me you don't know this nice robe! This robe belongs to my landlord's beautiful daughter, Lha mo. She is going to have her hair changing ritual in a few days. I'm sure you've already been invited. Very early this morning, my landlord told me to give you this robe as a marriage proposal!" said Uncle Ston pa.

Tshe ring looked at the robe carefully and realized it really was Lha mo's robe. He then cheerfully said, "Great! Today is auspicious! I'm on the way to your landlord's home now to do some oil business. Give the robe to me and I'll propose marriage today!"

"Sure, but may I borrow your robe and a horse? Otherwise, how can I go back? I would be naked and barefoot," said Uncle Ston pa.

Tshe ring looked at Uncle Ston pa's bare feet and thought, "True. It would be difficult for Ston pa to go back naked and barefoot. Also, I can take back my robe and horse after he reaches Lha mo's home." Tshe ring then immediately gave Uncle Ston pa one of his several horses and his own robe.

After putting on Tshe ring's robe, Uncle Ston pa said, "Thank you, Tshe ring! Since you're so nice to me today, I'll tell you one of my landlord's daughter's secrets. Being a servant at her home, I have learned many secret things about her."

"What secret?" asked Tshe ring.

Uncle Ston pa jumped on the horse, galloped off, turned his head, and yelled, "I heard that Lha mo likes a man with an oily penis! I suggest you put some oil on your penis if you want to have Lha mo!"

Tshe ring was pleased with this information. He leapt off his horse, took an oil container off the back of a packhorse, and dipped

his penis into the oil. Before Tshe ring finished putting the oil container on the horse's back, the landlord's loyal servants dashed up on their horses. When they saw Tshe ring wearing Lha mo's robe, they grabbed him, and jerked off his pants. When they found that his penis was oily, they tied him up and took him to the landlord.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

lha mo ལྷ །

ston pa ཟ ཤ ས

tshe dbang rdo rje བ ད ར ཉ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

tshe ring བ ན

TRICKING THE LANDLORD'S FRIEND AGAIN

Tshe dbang rdo rje 財項多傑 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

One morning Uncle Ston pa was going to have breakfast when he saw Tshe ring, the oil merchant whom he had tricked, coming to take revenge. Uncle Ston pa jumped up and ran for a long time on an empty stomach. At around noon he saw a nunnery in the distance. Even though he was exhausted from hunger and thirst, he used his last bit of strength to dash to the gate. It was locked. He heard many nuns chanting loudly inside. He called to the nuns to open the door, but he was so exhausted that his voice was very low. Finally, he gave up and lay in the shade of a prayer pole by the gate, hoping someone would eventually come.

While he was lying on the ground, looking up at the sky, he saw several bits of white cloud right above him and the prayer pole. He imagined the clouds to be big pieces of thick bread, giant pots of hot noodles, large plates of steaming mutton, and many other delicious foods. The clouds slowly moved far behind the prayer pole and he felt the pole was falling on him. He closed his eyes, hoping someone would save him.

Suddenly, Uncle Ston pa heard footsteps. He opened his eyes and saw Tshe ring angrily looking at him. "Stand up! You devil!" yelled Tshe ring.

"Oh, hi!" said Uncle Ston pa. "Thanks for coming. Do you have any food with you?"

"I don't have any food, but I have you!" replied Tshe ring.

"The nuns are chanting inside," said Uncle Ston pa. "They might give us some food if you tell them that this prayer pole is falling down."

"What? You want to trick me again by saying this prayer pole is falling down? This prayer pole is standing straight. It isn't moving!" replied Tshe ring.

"No, no, no! It is falling. Look at the top of the prayer pole and the clouds above it," explained Uncle Ston pa.

Tshe ring gazed at the top of the prayer pole and the clouds above it for a while. The clouds were moving and the distance between the pole top and the clouds seemed to be getting bigger. Tshe ring then also felt the pole was falling. Without a second thought, Tshe ring started yelling loudly, "Oh my Buddha! This pole is falling. Please come help!"

"Call more loudly," said Uncle Ston pa, "They're chanting and won't hear you if you don't yell really loudly."

Tshe ring used his mightiest voice. A few young nuns dashed out and screeched at Tshe ring, "You're crazy! The prayer pole is not falling down!"

Tshe ring looked at the nuns in surprise and checked the prayer pole again. He noticed that the pole was still standing straight up. Tshe ring tried to explain, but the nuns were furious because they thought he was bringing bad luck to the nunnery by shouting "The prayer pole is falling down!" They threw stones at Tshe ring and chased him away.

Luckily, the young nuns noticed Uncle Ston pa lying on the ground in great hunger, thirst, and exhaustion. They carried him into the nunnery where he was safe from his enemy, Tshe ring.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa རྩོན་པ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲହ୍ମଦୁର୍ଗ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

tshe ring བྲହ୍ମରିଙ୍

TRICKING NUNS

Tshe dbang rdo rje 財項多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

Uncle Ston pa worked very hard once he realized there were many young and beautiful nuns in the nunnery. Every day, he got up early and went to bed late, cooking, cleaning, and doing other chores for the young nuns. They enjoyed his delicious food and other thoughtful services, such as washing clothes. Slowly, the young nuns stopped cooking and cleaning and just relied on Uncle Ston pa. They also treated Uncle Ston pa well by giving him a good room, warm blankets, and nice robes to wear.

One evening, Uncle Ston pa didn't take supper to one of the most beautiful young nuns. Instead, he waited for her to come to his room to get food. After a while, she started walking towards his room as he had predicted. As soon as she reached the door of his room, he started moaning and trembling as though he were in great pain.

"Oh, Uncle! What's wrong?" asked the beautiful nun.

"It's my old stomach problem," replied Uncle Ston pa in a broken quivering voice.

"I'm so sad to see that you're in great pain. How can I help you?" inquired the nun.

"Thanks, but you can't help me! I had this illness when I was a child and only a sage can cure me with her special treatment."

"What is it? Please tell me. I'll help you!" said the nun.

"The method is called..." replied Uncle Ston pa, "wheat-barley rubbing... the wheat and barley have to be rubbed together with butter."

"That's easy! We have wheat, barley, and butter here. I can rub them for you now," exclaimed the nun.

"But..." said Uncle Ston pa, "the wheat with butter has to be in my navel. The barley with butter has to be in your navel."

"That's not difficult. Let's do it now!" exclaimed the nun.

"You're a wonderful nun! But no... no... let me die!" moaned Uncle Ston pa. "You should not pollute your body to save me. I will see you in the next life."

These touching words moved the nun, who became very emotional and began weeping.

"Oh, please don't say that, Uncle. You can't die. I need you!" cried the nun.

"Please don't cry!" said Uncle Ston pa sorrowfully. "Bring the wheat, barley, and butter, and let's cure this awful illness!"

Uncle Ston pa smeared his navel with butter and three grains of wheat. He then put three grains of barley coated with butter in the nun's navel. As soon as the nun lay on his bed, he rolled on top of her and started rubbing his belly against hers. Their body heat and rubbing quickly melted the butter, which flowed down to her thighs and at the same time, the liquid butter lubricated Uncle Ston pa's erection, which made it easy for it to slip through her buttery thighs and touch her virginity.

"Uncle, Uncle! There's something strange..." the nun nervously exclaimed.

"Don't worry. It's just the butter from our navels!" replied Uncle Ston pa.

As soon as she relaxed her thigh muscles Uncle Ston pa's buttered erection penetrated her vagina. After a few of Uncle Ston pa's skillful humps and bumps, they both started moaning in great sexual pleasure.

Uncle Ston pa used the same trick to sleep with most of the young, beautiful nuns over the next few months. He also worked very hard to serve the nuns, whom he loved dearly. Thus, none of his lovers reported him to the abbess until the most beautiful nun became obviously pregnant.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa སྟོན་པ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲହ୍ମବନ୍ଧୁ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE ABBESS

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

One day at a ritual gathering, the abbess noticed the most beautiful nun was pregnant. She then called the pregnant nun to her room and asked who the father was.

When the pregnant nun refused to answer, the abbess thought, "Hm, this man in disguise must be very attractive, otherwise she wouldn't protect him. I must find and keep him for myself!" Next, she locked the nunnery gate, stood in a deep ditch, and ordered everyone to jump over the ditch, so she could check between their thighs. The nuns then jumped over the ditch one by one.

Worried that the abbess would see his dangling penis while he was jumping over the ditch, Uncle Ston pa secretly tied his penis with a string from his robe and jumped over the ditch very carefully when it was his turn. Luckily the abbess did not see his penis.

He also got lucky the second time when the abbess still did not see his penis. Uncle Ston pa giggled and thought, "You'll never catch me! Let me jump over your head one more time!" He tugged up his robe arrogantly and for the third time jumped over the ditch with all his might. Unfortunately, the string broke and the abbess saw Uncle Ston pa's long penis dangling between his legs. She then immediately ordered her disciples to grab him.

As soon as Uncle Ston pa was caught, the abbess said, "As punishment, I will lock this immoral man in my room and teach him how to be a good person. What do you think?"

"No! No! No!" said most of the nuns, "This is a nunnery. We shouldn't keep any men here. Make him leave now!"

"It's a pity that I can't have him," thought the abbess. "He has the longest, thickest penis I've ever seen. It must be very comforting. I really want to have it. What should I do?"

While the abbess was thinking, a manly nun, who hadn't been cared for as well as the others by Uncle Ston pa said, "This devil raped some of our nuns. We should cut off his thing before we drive him out!"

"Cut it off?" thought the abbess. "That sounds like a good idea. I can keep his penis for myself after we cut it off!" Then, she yelled, "Yes, we should cut it off to teach him a lesson!"

As the abbess was about to chop off Uncle Ston pa's penis with a cleaver, Uncle Ston pa cautioned, "My blood will pollute your holy nunnery if you do this here. I suggest you to do it outside."

The abbess thought, "Yes, it's not good to spill blood in the nunnery. But how and where should I do it?" Doubting herself, she asked Uncle Ston pa.

"If you really want to cut it off, can you do it in a civilized way?" implored Uncle Ston pa.

"Ha! What civilized way?" said the abbess.

"Tie it with a long rope and put me outside of the nunnery with my hands tied up," said Uncle Ston pa, "Then, you all pull it off with all your strength."

"Sure, let's do that now!" said the abbess angrily and ordered her disciples to tie Uncle Ston pa's hands and take him outside. The abbess then tied one end of a long leather rope to Uncle Ston pa's penis and ordered her disciples to hold the other end of the leather rope.

Before the nuns started pulling the leather rope, Uncle Ston pa said, "Please coat it with a lot of butter and close the gate before you pull."

"Why?" asked the abbess.

"If you coat it with a lot of butter, the blood won't spill everywhere. Butter helps stop bleeding and reduces pain," replied Uncle Ston pa. "If you close the gate, your gentle nuns won't see this horrifying scene. I'm afraid that most of your disciples will have nightmares if they see it."

The abbess thought, "That's a good idea. It's bad if a lot of blood spills in front of my nunnery, and I also won't be able to sleep well if I see bleeding." She then brought a big chunk of butter, untied Uncle Ston pa, and ordered him to coat his penis by himself.

Uncle Ston pa smeared lots of butter around his penis slowly, thus also lubricating his hands. He did it deliberately because he was hoping the butter would coat the rope, his penis, and his wrists, and he could thus escape as soon as they closed the gate.

After Uncle Ston pa's liberally buttered his penis, the abbess tied his hands again, went inside the nunnery, and ordered her nuns to shut the gate tight. In less than a minute, Uncle Ston pa had slipped the ropes off his oily hands and penis, and tied the long rope to the prayer pole by the gate. While he was running away, he heard "One, two, three, pull! Pull again! Pull harder!"

The nuns pulled the rope as hard as they could again and again, but nothing happened. In the beginning, they all thought Uncle Ston pa had a very hard, tough penis. After a few pulls, they began to imagine something had gone wrong. When the abbess opened the gate, Uncle Ston pa was out of sight. The abbess yelled furiously, "You horrible creature! I'll kill you!"

The nuns were shocked to hear this. Some young nuns giggled and whispered, "Ha! She was tricked!"

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa རྩୋନ୍ ཕ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲାଙ୍ ར୍ୱୋ ར୍ୱେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

HELPING A POOR MAN

Tshe dbang rdo rje 財項多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

While fleeing the nunnery, Uncle Ston pa heard, "Help me! Buddha!" He followed the sound and saw a poor young man kneeling on the ground and shouting. Seeing the man's patched clothes and worn-out shoes, Uncle Ston pa asked, "Hey! Young man! What's wrong?"

"My turnips..." replied the man with a trembling voice, "are not growing!"

"Well, plant something else," suggested Uncle Ston pa.

"It's easy to say that..." retorted the man angrily, "Do you know how much I've lost in this evil field?"

"Sorry, I don't know. Please tell me," encouraged Uncle Ston pa.

"I've lost everything!" exclaimed the man. "My only ox died suddenly while we were plowing this field. I lost my family's only treasure, a coral necklace, while I was sowing seeds in this field. My wife and only son got a strange illness when we were irrigating this field and they both passed away today!"

"Oh! I'm very sorry to hear that," Uncle Ston pa commiserated.

"I've lost everything in this evil field! The turnips that we planted in this field are not growing. What should I do?!" the man exclaimed and began wailing even more loudly.

"Please stop. I can help you," said Uncle Ston pa.

"Really?" asked the man with surprise.

"Yes, but you have to do what I suggest!" replied Uncle Ston pa.

"Tell me. I'll do it even if I die. I'm a man with nothing!" the man said.

"It's not that difficult," explained Uncle Ston pa. "Just chant, 'I wish my turnips would grow as big as a donkey's penis' 108 times

every day for a month. After a month, take all the turnips and lay them in front of your village's nunnery and shout 'Penises for sale!' With the money you earn, invite the nun who asks you about Ston pa to your home and take good care of her."

"I'll do as you say, but who is Ston pa?" asked the man.

"It's my name. I'll visit you after a year!" concluded Uncle Ston pa, and then he left.

The farmer did what Uncle Ston pa suggested. After a month, the field was full of turnips as big as donkey penises. He brought them to the nunnery gate and shouted, "Penises for sale! Penises for sale!"

First, the abbess sneaked out and bought the longest penis-shaped turnip. Then, other nuns dashed out and bought more. Finally, at sunset, a pregnant nun came and asked, "Dear Uncle, do you know a man named Ston pa?"

"Yes!" replied the man in great surprise. "He is my savior!"

"Is he well? Does he live with you?" asked the eager nun.

"Yes, yes, he is very well! He left on the same day we met. But he is coming back in a few months. May I invite you to my home? I promised him that I would take good care of you!"

"Really?!" exclaimed the nun joyfully, "He's a great man!"

"Yes, yes," agreed the man. "He'll be back in a few months. Let's go to my home."

The nun followed the man, stayed at his home, and soon gave birth to a lovely boy who had Uncle Ston pa's face, which reminded the man of his own son. The man took good care of the mother and the son. They had a happy life together.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa རྩତ୍ପା

tshe dbang rdo rje བେଦ୍ବାଙ୍ଗର୍ଦ୍ଭୋଜେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

HELPING AN OLD WOMAN

Tshe dbang rdo rje 財項多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

One day, on the way to the turnip seller's home, Uncle Ston pa saw an old woman weeping by the road and asked, "Dear Aunt, why are you crying?"

The old woman wiped her tears away replying, "My husband is sick and I'm too weak to plow the field."

"Don't you have any children?" asked Uncle Ston pa.

"I do. I have three sons."

"Don't they live with you?"

"Yes, we all live in one yard, but they..." and the woman started wailing more loudly.

"Dear Aunt, please don't cry and tell me more. I'll help you," comforted Uncle Ston pa.

"My sons took our family property from my husband and me after they married. Now my husband and I only have our family's oldest room and this unyielding field. My husband got sick this morning and I'm too weak to do any heavy labor. I really don't know what to do!"

"Don't worry," comforted Uncle Ston pa. Then he asked, "Which is your home?"

"That one," replied the woman, pointing at a house near a big tree by the Yellow River.

"I see," Uncle Ston pa commented, thought for a while, and then said, "Go home and rest. You and your husband should just say 'No' to everything from today on."

The woman thanked Uncle Ston pa and went home. While the woman's sons were all at home, Uncle Ston pa knocked on the door and said loudly, "I'm a fortuneteller and I'm very thirsty. May I ask for some water?"

"No," said the old woman from the shanty.

"I'll tell your fortune if you give me a bowl of water," yelled Uncle Ston pa.

"No," said the old woman.

"I know you don't believe me," yelled Uncle Ston pa. "Let me tell your family fortune first and you give me a bowl of water if I'm right." He chanted loudly for a few seconds and then said, "You have three sons, right?"

"No," said the old woman.

Her sons and their wives thought, "He is right" and started listening closely to the conversation.

"Your sons took your family property, leaving you an old room and the worst field, right?"

"No," said the old woman.

Her sons and their wives looked at each other and listened even more carefully.

"Yesterday, while your husband was plowing the field, he found treasure and he started pretending to be sick, right?"

"No," said the old woman. Her sons and their wives looked at their father and noticed that he was lying in bed. They wondered, "Why is Mother lying to this fortuneteller? What he says is true!"

"The treasure is very small, but it is worth as much as all the properties that your village temple has, right?"

"No!" the old woman yelled back.

"You and your husband divided the treasure into several parts, and hid it in many different places, right?"

"No!" yelled the old woman again. Her greedy sons dashed out, opened the gate, invited Uncle Ston pa into their rooms, offered him their best tea and food, and asked him where the treasure was and how they could find it. Uncle Ston pa said the same thing secretly to each of the three sons, "According to my divination, they're in three places: the room, field, and clothes of your parents. They will give them to the kindest of you three children."

From that day on, the three sons and their wives were very nice to their parents. Hoping to get the treasure, the wives washed their parents' clothes, cleaned their room, and cooked good food for them every day. The sons plowed, irrigated, and harvested the field with great care until their parents passed away.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa རྩୟଣ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲାତ୍ସଙ୍ଗୁଡୋଜୀ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE ABBESS AGAIN

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

Uncle Ston pa finally arrived at the home of the farmer, whom he had helped to grow and sell penis-shaped turnips. Uncle Ston pa then lived with his wife, the most beautiful nun, and his son in a new home built by the farmer.

One day, the farmer visited Uncle Ston pa and said, "My dear savior! How are you?"

"I'm very well, my friend!" greeted Uncle Ston pa, "How are you?"

"I'm... well," replied the farmer with some hesitation.

"Friend," said Uncle Ston pa, "You don't look well. Please tell me what troubles you."

"You always see my heart. I..." continued the farmer, "I fell in love with..."

"With whom?" asked Uncle Ston pa.

"The... the abbess," replied the farmer shyly.

"Oh, my friend...haha!" Uncle Ston pa chortled. "How? How did you fall in love with her?"

"She is kind to me," said the farmer. "Every time, I bring my turnips to the nunnery, she is always first to buy my turnips and always gives me extra money. These days and nights, my mind is full of her beautiful face and warm words!"

"Wow! You really did fall in love with her," said Uncle Ston pa, "Did you tell her that?"

"No. I can't... I'm speechless in front of her. I don't know how to tell her my feelings."

"I understand," said Uncle Ston pa, "Don't worry, I'll teach you."

"Thank you, my dear savior!" exclaimed the farmer in excitement, "Please teach me!"

"Sure," and Uncle Ston pa taught the farmer the "rolling turnip" trick. After learning all the details, the farmer thanked Uncle Ston pa and left.

Beginning the next day, the farmer stopped going to the nunnery to sell turnips. Before even a week had passed, the abbess came to see him.

As soon as she reached the door, the farmer started moaning and trembling in his bed, seemingly in great pain.

The abbess ran to him and asked, "Oh! What's wrong?"

"My stomach... hurts!" replied the farmer in a broken trembling voice.

"Oh, you're in great pain. Let me go find a doctor for you!" said the abbess.

"No doctors!" said the farmer. "They can't help me. I've been suffering from this stomachache for many years. There is only one way to cure it."

"How? I'll help you!" said the abbess.

"It's called 'Rolling Turnips'," replied the farmer.

"That's easy!" exclaimed the abbess in excitement, "You have so many turnips here. Where should I roll turnips?"

"Please roll the turnips on my stomach very hard," replied the farmer.

While the abbess was rushing towards him with one turnip, the farmer said, "One won't help. Please bring two more."

The abbess brought three turnips, placed them on the farmer's stomach, and started rolling them with her soft hands.

In an instant, the farmer's penis started rising, which he quickly covered with his both hands and said, "Ah...painful! Your hands are very gentle but it's helping! Please sit on the turnips and roll them with all your strength."

Then the abbess went over, straddled the farmer's groin, and started rolling the turnips up and down on his stomach with her buttocks.

"It's working," said the farmer, "Roll harder! Roll harder!"

An instant later, as she rolled the turnips down with her buttocks, the turnips slipped away, the farmer removed her pants, and uncovered his hard penis, which pierced right into her when she had plopped her buttocks against him. Feeling sudden pain, she asked, "What's that?"

"Don't worry! It's just a turnip," replied the farmer. She then kept doing it until she climaxed.

From that day on, she visited the farmer every evening to roll turnips on his belly. She soon became pregnant and stopped going to the nunnery when her belly became too big to hide. A few months later, she secretly gave birth to a lovely daughter at the farmer's home.

NON-ENGLISH TERM

ston pa རྩୋନ୍ ཕୁଁ
tshe dbang rdo rje བେଦ୍ବାଙ୍ଗ རୋର୍ଜେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

HELPING THE FARMER AGAIN

Tshe dbang rdo rje 財項多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

The abbess started missing her life in the nunnery after a few months of living with the farmer. At the farmer's home, she had to do many family chores such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, fetching water, and so on. When she was an abbess all these things had been done for her.

So she decided to leave the farmer. Noticing her discontent, the farmer consulted Uncle Ston pa, who taught him three things to say. He suggested that he say the first when she was going to leave the room, the second when his friends asked for the reason, and the third when she was about to leave with their daughter.

One early morning while the famer and his daughter were playing with some toys in bed, his wife said, "My dear husband, I'm going back to my nunnery now. Please forgive me! I really don't enjoy life here."

The farmer was shocked and didn't know what to say for a bit. Then he remembered Uncle Ston pa's suggestions and said, "Please don't feel sorry, dear. I totally understand you. Let's have a farewell party with my friends."

Happy to hear that her husband was willing to let her go, she agreed and started cooking a big meal. The farmer got up and went to fetch water. On the way, he invited his friends to the party. Soon the food was ready, his friends arrived, and the party began. During the party, one friend asked, "Friend, thanks a lot for the meal. May I ask what the occasion is?"

The farmer then repeated the second sentence taught by Uncle Ston pa, "This is for my dear wife. She gave me a lovely daughter. Today, she is going to leave this home forever!"

All the friends were shocked and asked, "Why?"

The farmer looked at his wife and they all gazed at her for answer.

She said nervously and sorrowfully, "I... I just miss my old life!"

"Miss your old life? Haha!" the friends laughed. "Won't you miss your lovely daughter if you leave?"

"I'll take her with me!" the wife declared.

All the friends gazed at the farmer expecting him to say that he would miss her. Instead he repeated the final phrase taught by Uncle Ston pa, "Turnips belong to the farmer, not the field after the harvest. Children are the father's, not the mother's after their birth! This is the nature of the world. If anyone violates it, they will go to the darkest part of Hell!"

His wife felt cold fear running through her body and said in a broken voice, "I'm... I'm just joking. I'm not leaving!" From that day on, she never again thought of leaving the farmer. She lived with the farmer and their lovely daughter for the rest of her life.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa རྩོང་པ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲାତ୍ସଙ୍ଗଡୁଓଜୀ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE WIFE

Tshe dbang rdo rje བྲྱତ୍ସଙ୍ଗଦୁଓଜୀ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

One day, a few soldiers came and told Uncle Ston pa that their king wanted to see him. Uncle Ston pa was not worried about himself, but he was worried about his beautiful wife. He would be away for a few weeks since the king lived far away and he knew she was interested in an unmarried man living in a nearby home.

Before leaving the village, Uncle Ston pa cautioned his wife, "Be very careful with the man in our neighbor's family. He has a penis as big as my leg!"

He then went to the neighbor's home and told the unmarried man, "I know you like my wife, but be careful. She has teeth in her vagina!"

Both the wife and the unmarried man were pleased to know that Uncle Ston pa was leaving. At the same time, they were very curious about what Uncle Ston pa had said.

In the evening, Uncle Ston pa's wife couldn't sleep. She was hoping the neighbor man would visit her, but she was also afraid that the man really had a penis as huge as Uncle Ston pa's leg, which would kill her. So she slept with a pair of small scissors in her hand.

At midnight, when most villagers were deeply asleep, the man snuck into Uncle Ston pa's home and was delighted to see Uncle Ston pa's beautiful wife alone in bed. Just as he was going to sneak under her quilt, he remembered what Uncle Ston pa had told him. He then slowly put his knee into her quilt to check her vagina. As soon as his knee touched her thigh, she thought, "Oh, my! He really has a penis as huge as my husband's leg. It'll kill me!" and stabbed it with the scissors.

The man screamed in pain and thought, "Oh, my! She really has teeth in her vagina! Luckily, I put my knee in first. Otherwise, my

penis would have been cut off!" He immediately jumped through the window, landed on the ground like a frog, hitting the ground with both of his knees, both hands, and his forehead, leaving clear prints. He then ran away with a bleeding knee.

The next morning, Uncle Ston pa's wife saw these prints and thought, "Luckily I didn't sleep with him. Otherwise, I would've been killed by his gigantic penis." Looking at the print made by the man's head, she said, "The head of his penis is as big as my head!" Looking at prints made by the man's knees, she said, "His testicles are as large as my knees!" And looking at the fingerprints, she said, "Even each of his pubic hair is as thick as one of my fingers!"

From that day on, the neighbor never tried to sleep with Uncle Ston pa's wife.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa རྩନ୍ ପା
tshe dbang rdo rje བେଦଙ୍ଗଦୁହୋଜୀ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE KING

Tshe dbang rdo rje བྲྱତ୍ସାଂଦୋଜୀ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

The king was very curious about Uncle Ston pa after hearing many stories of him tricking others. The king waited for Uncle Ston pa by the river near his palace.

As soon as Uncle Ston pa arrived, the king looked at him all over exclaiming, "So you're Uncle Ston pa! I don't see anything special, except your curly mustache!"

"My dear king, yes, I'm Uncle Ston pa, and I'm ordinary. There is nothing special about me."

"But I've heard many stories of you tricking my men. I want to see how you're going to trick me. If you can't trick me, I'll put you in jail forever," proclaimed the king.

"Oh, my dear king, please forgive me!" said Uncle Ston pa. "I need my magic book to trick people. Unfortunately, I forgot to bring it with me."

"Where is your magic book?" asked the king.

"It's at my home," replied Uncle Ston pa.

"I see. Let me send a soldier to your home to get the book quickly!" said the king.

"I've hidden the magic book. No one can find it, not even my wife! If you want me to trick you, please let me go and get the magic book," explained Uncle Ston pa.

The king really wanted to see the book so he said, "Sure, you go back now and bring the book here as soon as possible!"

"My dear king, it took us two days to get here from my home. May I borrow your best horse to go back to get the magic book?" asked Uncle Ston pa.

Thinking that he'd be able to see the magic book soon if he lent him a good horse, the king said, "Here, take my stallion. It can

run as fast as a flying eagle. You'll be able to get back tomorrow morning."

The king's stallion was startled as soon as Uncle Ston pa got near. Uncle Ston pa said, "My dear king, your horse doesn't like me. May I also borrow your robe? Then, your horse will obey me."

"Oh, yes, my horse doesn't like strangers!" said the king with a smile. He took off his nice robe, threw it to Uncle Ston pa, and said, "Here you go. Be quick! I can't wait to see your magic book!"

Uncle Ston pa put on the king's robe, jumped on the horse, and galloped across the river. As soon as he got to the other side of the river, he yelled, "My dear king, this is how I tricked you today!"

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa བྱତ୍ରୀ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲାଙ୍କୁ རୋ རେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING A VILLAGE LEADER

Tshe dbang rdo rje 財項多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

On the way home, Uncle Ston pa passed a village where he saw many beggars lining the sides of the road. When he asked them why they were begging, they said that their greedy village leader had taken all their property, including their pots. Uncle Ston pa then went to the village leader's home and knocked on the gate. A servant came out and asked, "Who are you?"

"I'm the king's messenger," replied Uncle Ston pa while dismounting from the stallion. "Tell the village leader that I have come to borrow a pot."

The servant dashed back inside and told the village leader that the king's messenger was outside and that he wanted to borrow a pot. Surprised to hear that, the village leader went to the gate, peeked out, and was shocked to see Uncle Ston pa riding the king's horse and wearing the king's robe. He thought, "He must be the king's messenger. Otherwise, how can he have such a good horse and such fine clothes? If I lend him a pot, the king might give me more land!" He then went out, greeted Uncle Ston pa, and lent him a big pot. Uncle Ston pa thanked the village leader and went home with the big pot. The next day, he went to the village leader and returned the big pot with a small pot inside.

The village leader asked in surprise, "What's this small pot?"

"Oh, sorry, I forgot to tell you that your big pot gave birth last night, and this is the baby pot!" said Uncle Ston pa.

"Wow! Thanks! How did you do that?" asked the village leader.

"The stove at home always makes pots pregnant. Every time, I put a pot on it to cook food, a small pot appears the next day!" replied Uncle Ston pa.

"That's interesting!" exclaimed the greedy village leader. "I have a gold pot. Can you help me to get it pregnant?"

"I've never tried a gold pot on my stove, but I can try," replied Uncle Ston pa.

"That's great!" said the village leader in great excitement, and handed his most precious gold pot to Uncle Ston pa.

"I'll come visit you tomorrow at this time," said Uncle Ston pa and left. As soon as he got home, he smashed the gold pot into many little pieces, and gave them to the poor villagers.

The next day, Uncle Ston pa took a bag of ash and went to the village leader's home. As soon as he reached the gate, the village leader dashed out and asked about his gold pot.

While weeping, Uncle Ston pa handed him the bag of ash and said, "My stove and your gold pot both died last night!"

"What? How did it happen?" yelled the village leader.

"I don't know. Last night, I put your pot on my stove, cooked food in it, and went to bed as usual. This morning, I found that my stove had collapsed and there was only a pile of ash beneath it. I think the ash is your gold pot. It's dead!" replied Uncle Ston pa.

"How is that possible?!" yelled the village leader.

"If a pot can get pregnant then it's possible for a pot to die!" said Uncle Ston pa, "My father told me that the stove would make the pot give birth if the pot was appropriate. Otherwise, it would turn the pot into ash and die!"

After hearing that, the village leader fainted from sadness and regret.

Uncle Ston pa apologized and left.

From that day on, the village leader was too sad to be cruel, and villagers started leading happy lives.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa སྟོན་པ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲହ୍ମବନ୍ଧୁ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING A SOLDIER

Tshe dbang rdo rje 才项多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

As soon as Uncle Ston pa ran away with the king's stallion and clothes, the king sent a soldier to catch him. Although the soldier tried his best he couldn't catch Uncle Ston pa the whole day because the king's stallion was the best horse in the country.

In the evening, the soldier reached the village where Uncle Ston pa helped the poor villagers. Uncle Ston pa noticed the soldier, hid the king's stallion and robe, and made a flag by tying a piece of his sash to the handle of a shovel. Disguising himself as a diviner, he held the flag and yelled, "I'm the best diviner! I can tell you where to find lost property and people!"

The soldier soon approached and asked, "Diviner! Can you really locate lost people?"

"Of course, I can! I'm the best diviner!" said Uncle Ston pa, "Test me if you don't believe me!"

"Really!" said the soldier doubtfully, "Then tell me who I'm looking for!"

"That's easy!" replied Uncle Ston pa, chanting quietly while rubbing his prayer beads in his palms. "You're looking for a man in a very nice robe with a good stallion!"

The soldier was shocked and asked, "Where can I find him?"

"I can tell you but you won't catch him unless you speed up your horse," replied Uncle Ston pa.

"Yes, you're right. I can't catch him because he has our king's best stallion!" said the soldier. "How can I speed up my horse?"

"It's easy!" said Uncle Ston pa, "But what will I get if I tell you?"

The soldier threw a bag of silver coins to him. After checking the coins, Uncle Ston pa continued, "Great! Let me help you. Please close your eyes and hold your horse tightly!"

As soon as the soldier closed his eyes, Uncle Ston pa went to the back of the soldier's horse, raised the flagstaff in his hand, and then smashed the flagstaff on the horse's buttocks with all his might. The horse whinnied, jumped, and dashed away in pain, causing the soldier to take such a painful tumble that it took several minutes for him to get up. When he finally stood up, he saw his horse was almost out of his sight and exclaimed, "How did you do that? My horse is really running fast!"

"Yeah, your horse can run fast because of my magic flagstaff," replied Uncle Ston pa.

"But how am I going to catch my horse now?" asked the soldier.

"That's also easy," said Uncle Ston pa. "Turn around and close your eyes. I'll help you."

As soon as the soldier closed his eyes, Uncle Ston pa used all his strength and hit the back of the soldier's head with his flagstaff. The soldier fell unconscious in an instant. Uncle Ston pa then took the soldier to the top of a hill and left him there with his flag.

It was dark when the soldier regained consciousness. He looked around, saw a light at the bottom of the hill, and walked down towards the light. When he got near, he heard giggling and noticed that the light and the sounds were both coming out of a house skylight. He climbed up to the roof on a ladder and looked down into the skylight. He saw a man and a woman in bed. The woman was covering her face with a quilt and giggling. The man was holding a lamp with one hand, lifting the end of the woman's quilt with the other hand, and looking at the woman's vagina.

The woman giggled and said, "Quick! Quick! I'm cold!"

"Wait! Wait! It's amazing!" said the man while lowering the lamp and sticking his head under the quilt.

"What do you see?" asked the woman.

"I see everything!" replied the man.

"Do you see my horse?" shouted the soldier from the roof.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa བྱନ୍ତྰ

tshe dbang rdo rje བྲାଙ୍କୁ རୋ རେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

TRICKING THE KING AGAIN

Tshe dbang rdo rje 財項多杰 (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

Not long after Uncle Ston pa arrived home, the king's soldiers came and took him and his whole family to the king's palace. As soon as they reached the palace, Uncle Ston pa started yelling and beating both his wife and son viciously. The king noticed and asked, "Why are you beating them?"

"My dear king, when I was away, my stupid wife burnt my trick book while she was cooking. So, sadly, I can't give you my book of tricks."

"I see. But why are you also beating your son?" continued the king.

"My stupid son slaughtered our family's female donkey for food while I was away!" replied Uncle Ston pa, "Now we can't give you butter for this year's tax."

"What? You gave me donkey butter!?" exclaimed the king.

"Please don't get upset, my dear king. Our village has only donkeys, which is why it is called Donkey Land. We live our life with donkeys. We rent the male donkeys, we milk the female donkeys, and we slaughter some old donkeys every year. This is the way we live."

"You people from Donkey Land are disgusting," said the king. "I never knowingly eat donkey meat and butter."

"Sorry, dear king, but villagers in Donkey Land don't know that. But we three can help you by taking away the donkey butter and meat in your storehouse. We all grew up with donkeys and really enjoy donkey products," said Uncle Ston pa.

"Great idea!" said the king. "Come with me."

The king took them to his storehouse and commanded, "Remove all the donkey products!"

"At once!" chorused Uncle Ston pa, his wife, and his son. They then removed three horse loads of the best butter, meat, and cheese, and happily went home.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

ston pa བྱନ୍ତ୍ରୟ

tshe dbang rdo rje ཁྲ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗ ཚୋ རେ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)

Vol 47 2017

ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES

2017 Vol 47

SHORT STORIES

WAITING FOR THE RETURN

Rdo rje skyabs རྡོ་རྗེ ཤྙྱା

"Tshe ring, how many days has your father been away?"

"Father's been gone for twenty-one days," Tshe ring replied.

"Oh! Twenty-one days isn't a short time. It's time for him to return. I hope he comes back safely and quickly," Tshe ring's grandmother observed, and resumed chanting and spinning her old prayer wheel.

Spring had passed and now it was summer. Under the blue, windy summer sky, an enormous grassland was decorated with countless yaks and a few horses sprawled across the feet of mountains that varied dramatically in height.

This was Stobas ldan's homeland. A yak-hair tent pitched between two hills sheltered Stobas ldan's family. It was the land where Stobas ldan's ancestors had dwelt and where Stobas ldan's descendants desired to live. From generation to generation, this was the land of O tho's clan. Moreover, O tho was Stobas ldan's family name. His full name was O tho Stobas ldan, but everyone called him Stobas ldan.

Stobas ldan, Tshe ring's father, was a strong, responsible man. At the age of eight, he had begun to learn how to hunt from his father. When he was ten, he began herding livestock. By the age of eighteen, his father was dead, and the next year he married and continued his father's life. Time passed as quickly as flowing water and Stobas ldan had a ten-year-old son named Tshe ring. Everything Stobas ldan attempted he completed very nicely. His wife, his mother, and even the community members admired him.

One day a month earlier when the sun had set behind the mountain, Rdor b+ha, the local leader, came to Stobas ldan's home and shared dinner with his family. Announcing that he had

something to say to Stobas ldan privately, he and Stobas ldan went out of the yak-hair tent. Tshe ring also went outside and herded the livestock into the yard where a Tibetan mastiff lay. The watchdog, as was its character, barked ferociously at Rdor b+ha. His breed was very loyal to their owners, and protected the owner's family and the livestock at all times. But they were very cruel, even merciless, to strangers. No matter whether poor or rich, a leader or a common person, you knew to be careful around Tibetan mastiffs when you were in Tibet.

The community leader and Stobas ldan walked to a small hill far from Stobas ldan's tent to avoid the watchdog's frantic barking. Those living on this particular grassland had the custom that when they had something important and confidential to discuss, they went into the hills or somewhere far from their home to avoid the barking dogs and for privacy.

When they reached the hill, it was dark enough that stars shone brightly in the sky amid an overarching silence.

"Stobas ldan, I have something important to tell you," announced the community leader. "Our area is under attack. Our higher leaders ask every community to send two men to defend it."

"So..."

"Well, I have decided and I want you to join this battle," the leader said, interrupting Stobas ldan.

"Why? Why you and me?" Stobas ldan asked.

"I'm the community leader so I have the responsibility. You are the strongest person in this community, and I think you are also responsible," Rdor b+ha replied.

"If I say no..."

"Yes. You can say no, but think about your family, think about our ancestors, think about our next generation. We have lived on this land for generations. If we let it slip from our hands, where will we live? What would our next generation do? Everyone on this grassland must be accountable, especially men like you and me," answered the community leader.

Stobas ldan remained silent and gazed far into the distance. All was silence. A bit later, he turned, faced the leader, and asked forcefully, "When do we leave?"

"The day after tomorrow. According to the Tibetan calendar that day is a good day," replied the community leader.

"OK, I'll go but not because of you. It is for this land - for my homeland. And I want you to promise not to let my family know this," entreated Stobas ldan.

"I promise," the community leader agreed.

The next day, everything on the grassland was the same as usual. The turquoise sky was crystal clear above dense grass that swayed back and forth. Streams flowed softly. Livestock enjoyed their life on the grassland and birds flew freely and sang melodiously.

Stobas ldan got up early to burn incense and offer pure water to the deities. His wife finished milking, came back into the tent, and prepared breakfast. Tshe ring sat by his grandmother and listened to some of her many interesting stories. A bit later, the family gathered around the stove and had breakfast together. The sun began to rise above the eastern mountain. Soon it was warm and bright, another wonderful day on the grassland.

After the meal, Stobas ldan spoke to his family, "I have something to tell you. Rdor b+ha told me that there was important business to take care of and I must leave to work on it with him. You all do your usual work and don't worry about me."

"Really? Father, don't forget to buy some candies and toys for me," said Tshe ring.

"I won't forget, but I want you to help your mother do whatever needs to be done," Stobas ldan said, patting his son's head. "Listen to your mother and do whatever she says."

"Fine, I promise," Tshe ring responded immediately. Stobas ldan felt good about his obedient, agreeable son.

"How long will you be gone?" asked his wife.

"I'm not sure, but I guess not too long. Maybe several days will be enough," replied Stobas ldan.

"My dear son, I hope you come back as quickly as you can. Wherever you go, home is the best place for you," his mother said before resuming her scripture chanting and spinning the old prayer wheel.

Stobas Idan nodded and said nothing. He didn't let his family know that he was going to fight. He did not want them to worry.

The next morning, the community leader came on horseback to Stobas Idan's tent. The watchdog barked loudly. Stobas Idan was already prepared and quickly mounted his best horse with his rifle slung across his back. They rode away before dawn. The only observer of their departure was the watchdog.

As the sun rose the next morning, Tshe ring's mother woke him and gave him breakfast before sending him off to herd the livestock. From that day, he herded in his father's absence. He herded the yaks to pastures where fresh grass grew and sometimes drove them to streams to drink. He had good herding skills because he had often herded with his father. Though he was still a child, he could herd almost as well as his father.

Time passed, as it always does, without a pause. They woke up every day to find a new day had already begun. Tshe ring herded and sometimes grazed the yaks on the mountains. From the mountain height, he gazed far into the distance, hoping to see his father returning. He dreamt every night that his father was returning with candies and various toys, but dreams are just dreams and not the substance of reality.

Tshe ring's grandmother said little. She chanted scriptures and rotated her prayer wheel, hoping in her heart that her son would soon return. Since her husband had died, her son was everything to her. She waited for him in the same way that Tshe ring waited for his father. They both lived for his return.

Another also waited for Stobas Idan to come back - Tshe ring's mother. A very diligent wife and mother, she got up every morning before anyone else, milked the female yaks, and then cooked breakfast. The rest of her day was filled with many chores, including

collecting yak dung, carrying water long distances to their tent, and putting young livestock in the livestock enclosure.

After breakfast one day, she suddenly thought it has been a long time since her husband had left for "business." But being busy with chores she couldn't remember exactly how long he had been gone. She asked, "Tshe ring, how many days has your father been away?"

"Today is the twenty-first day," Tshe ring replied with absolute assurance. He remembered it clearly because he was urgently hoping for his father's return.

His grandmother exclaimed, "Oh! Twenty-one days! That's not a short time. It's time for him to return. I hope he comes back safely and quickly." Then she continued chanting and turning the old prayer wheel.

Tshe ring went to herd the yaks as usual. He again climbed the mountain and gazed into the distance, wishing for his father's return. He thought, "Today is the twenty-first day. It is not a short time. Why hasn't he returned?"

At dusk, Tshe ring followed his livestock home. As usual, Tshe ring's mother prepared supper in the tent. He sat by his grandmother and asked her to tell a story.

Suddenly, the watchdog barked. Tshe ring's mother asked him to investigate. Tshe ring went out and looked in the direction of the barks. Something indistinct was on the side of West Mountain. It was too far to see clearly.

"Mother, there is something blurry at the foot of West Mountain!" he yelled.

His mother and grandmother came out together. Tshe ring pointed with his finger. Not able to see anything his grandmother asked Tshe ring, "Is it your father?"

"I can't see clearly. It's too far away," he answered, "but it's moving toward our tent."

His mother put one hand to her forehead and squinted.

They stood side by side near the tent, and watched the black spot hopefully. Several minutes later, as the black spot came nearer, they could see it was a man on a horse, but they could not identify him. The sun was now behind the mountain. It was quickly getting darker, and still they stood, waiting.

As the rider got closer, the watchdog barked more loudly and ferociously.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

o tho ཁྱଶ

rdo rje skyabs རྡୋ རྗୟ ཤ୍ୟାବ

rdor b+ha རྡୋ ཚା

stobs ldan གྲୋ བୋନ

tshe ring ཐସେ ରିଙ୍

FAITH, FAITH, FAITH

Pad+ma skyabs དཔའ་མ་ཤྱାବྸ

The monastery had been just a haphazard collection of a few old, dilapidated buildings a few years earlier and then things began to change. The monastery now boasted a brilliant shrine, a large meeting hall, a *ma Ni* meeting hall, and a towering temple building. It seemed the monastery monks were competing to see who could erect the grandest building. Indeed, Reincarnation Bla ma 'Brong lived in a building bigger and taller than all the others. In his fifties and, though hair sprouted profusely from his neck, he was nearly bald. Locals commented that his big, thick ears indicated he was a pandita, and believed his former incarnation had been a renowned hermit who had displayed awesome, supernatural powers.

Most locals sincerely believed in Bla ma 'Brong who often said, "Life in this world is never peaceful." This seemed true, because he had heard that another monk in another monastery had declared himself to be his previous incarnation's embodiment. Bla ma 'Brong worried about this until the "impostor" died, whereupon Bla ma 'Brong led a less stressed life.

A large tribe of utterly devoted Buddhists lived near the monastery all spring if there was adequate grass for their livestock. These tribal members included Mkon skyid and her daughter, Klu sgron, who regularly took yogurt and milk to Bla ma 'Brong in the hope of having better future lives.

A river with many bobbing ice cakes flowed near the monastery one spring. This undulating line of water and ice resembled a serpent when viewed from a mountain top.

One morning, as cuckoos twittered from the branches to welcome spring's arrival, Klu sgron got up and said, "I have a toothache."

Her mother replied, "Well, it can't be very serious. You didn't complain about it yesterday. Go with our neighbor, Bkra shis, and sell the wool your father collected yesterday from our sheep."

"Yes, Mother," Klu sgron said, and went outside to wait for Bkra shis.

About an hour later, she was staring enviously at the wool sweater a young Chinese woman was wearing and said in embarrassment, "Chinese Sister, how beautiful your sweater is! What material is it made of?"

The Chinese woman sneered, raised her hand, pointed to the wool piled up like a hill on a truck behind her, and said, "Over there. It's made of wool."

Klu sgron looked at the clean, colorful, and attractive sweater again. The wool she had sold was mixed with dust. Looking at the wool sweater again, she said doubtfully, "Uh... Chinese Sister is joking."

The Chinese woman had given her *200 yuan* for the wool. Klu sgron then went home with Bkra shis, after counting the money thinking, "Mother will give one hundred *yuan* to the Vajrapani Temple, contribute one hundred *yuan* for our reincarnation *bla ma*, who will visit each family this month. But I'm sure she will still borrow one hundred *yuan* for Bla ma O's consecration."

As she was walking home, the image of that beautiful wool sweater flashed repeatedly in her mind.

When she arrived, her mother took the *200 yuan* without comment and asked, "How is your tooth?"

"It still hurts," Klu sgron said.

Her mother took out a picture of Bla ma 'Brong, leaned it against a small stone, and said, "You will be cured after prostrating to this picture one hundred times. Dear, take this yogurt to Bla ma after you finish your prostrations and ask him about your toothache. Maybe we'll need to invite some monks to chant."

Feeling a bit tired after hurriedly finishing her prostrations, Klu sgron rested for a few moments, took off her old sheep-skin robe,

put on a thin brown robe, and started down the zigzag path leading to the monastery. Sunshine bounced off the mountains under a cloudless blue sky. She felt better.

Bla ma 'Brong was getting out of bed when Klu sgron entered his chambers. After she prostrated three times, she told him all the details of her toothache. She was seventeen and not very beautiful. However, pert breasts, large eyes, and smooth lips made her attractive. Bla ma 'Brong gazed at her breasts and thought, "It's been too long since I engaged in my secrets," and then ordered Klu sgron to approach him. As he got ready to investigate her toothache, he held her cheeks warmly and said, "Open your mouth."

Klu sgron opened her mouth and closed her eyes...

After a bowl of *rtsam pa* and a piece of fried bread for breakfast, Bla ma 'Brong still felt a bit hungry and began eating the yogurt Klu sgron had brought. While eating, he picked up a newspaper and scanned it. A story entitled *A Teabowl* caught his eye:

Don grub was an intelligent, wise man who easily solved difficult problems. If two men, for example, quarreled over a horse, he could determine who the horse's real owner was.

One lovely summer afternoon, sunshine splashed through the windows onto the tables in an office where Don grub sat in a chair pondering something important. Smoke entered his mouth and then slithered out from his nostrils like a black serpent. Sudden loud knocking at the door roused him from his meditations. Two monks entered, looked at each other angrily with dark-red faces, and said simultaneously, "Great Teacher! This..."

"Wait! Wait! I don't know who is right if you both speak at the same time," said Don grub. He pointed to the monk on his right and said, "You go first."

The monk adjusted his cassock on his shoulder and said, "Great Teacher! Tshul khrims came to my home last night. I offered him butter tea in my silver teabowl. He said, 'It's so beautiful,' and looked at it

longingly again and again. In fact, I didn't want to sell it for even 2,000 yuan. We talked for a long time. During that time, I had to go out and pee. Tshul khrims was gone when I came back. I discovered that my teabowl was gone when I got up this morning and wanted to drink a bowl of tea. I looked for it everywhere in my home, but I didn't find it. You know, for a monk like me, I should find it in my room, but I didn't. Only Tshul khrims came to my room yesterday. When I politely asked him about the missing bowl, he angrily said, 'How unjust. We should go to court.' Great Teacher! Just think! How can I, a cassock-wearing monk lie?" Then he unhappily looked at the other monk, signaling that it was his turn.

The other monk emitted a short cough and began, "I went to Bkra shis's room, drank tea, and praised his teabowl. This is all true. But it's not true that I took his teabowl when I left. How could I do something like that as a cassock-wearing monk? Tibetans say, 'Digging black earth without a bottom, treating injustice without responding,' as if he thought I stole his teabowl. This is why we are here. Please make a correct decision. "*"oM ma Ni pad+me hUM, oM ma Ni pad+me hUM..."*

"Ha!" Don grub stood and said, "This happened between you two. For me it's easy!"

The two monks looked at Don grub's face in surprise. "In fact, this is a very easy question, but we don't know what punishment to give the thief. I'll give you a good way to identify the thief."

Bkra shis said, "Tshul khrims stole my teabowl."

Tshul khrims responded, "I vow by The Three Jewels that I didn't steal it."

Now forced to demonstrate his mysterious ability, Don grub stood up, closed the door, pulled the window curtains shut, and took an object wrapped in yellow cloth from his desk. It was a sculpture about thirty-five millimeters in length.

Forgetting their enmity, the two monks looked at each other in surprise.

Don grub said, "This is a real Buddha. You two must make an oath and touch this to the top of your head. The liar will leave this world in three days. Understand this if you still want to live."

He had resolved many different issues using this procedure. Don grub sincerely believed in this Buddha image and was confident he could quickly resolve this affair.

Bkra shis put the Buddha image on top of his head without hesitation and swore, "I will surely die in three days and then be reborn in Hell if I really stole Tshul khrims's teabowl."

Tshul khrims vowed, "I must go to Hell in three days if Bkra shis didn't steal my teabowl."

Don grub was amazed and said, "After three days the innocent will still live in this world and the sinner will be in Hell."

Then the two left, puzzled that such methods were being used to identify the guilty party.

Three days flew by and the two monks returned to Don grub, who was very surprised. He thought hard. His mysterious ability had evaporated. He hopelessly said, "A teabowl has no value. Go home."

"Hmph!" Bla ma 'Brong exclaimed, when he finished reading the story, and thought, "Don grub isn't a very clever man."

Suddenly, he remembered that Stobs ldan had invited him to his father's funeral. He put the bowl of yogurt down and was soon walking on a path, carrying several volumes of scriptures.

Stobs ldan was honest and his family was the richest in the village. "You aren't honest, you're a fool," his father had often said. "Helping others is expensive! Don't waste your money!"

Nevertheless, Stobs ldan helped others if he was able, ignoring his father's injunction.

When Bla ma 'Brong reached his destination, Stobs ldan said, "Lord, I regret that I am an unfilial son and couldn't serve my father well while he was living, but my heart is calm today for you have come to chant for Father. Please, bless Father's soul so he will be reborn in this world or in Western Paradise."

"Don't worry. I have a way to ensure your father will be reborn in this world. You will see him again," Bla ma 'Brong assured and began chanting.

On her way back home, Klu sgron realized something had happened when she saw many people gathered at Stobs ldan's home. She soon realized that it was a funeral. A moment later, her cheeks turned as red as apples when she caught sight of Bla ma 'Brong. She rushed home in embarrassment.

Locals were preoccupied with the funeral and ignored her.

When she got home, her mother had dinner ready. Mkon skyid said, "Daughter, is your tooth okay? What did our benefactor, Bla ma 'Brong, say?"

"Oh! my tooth is no longer painful," she replied.

"What did he say about it?" Mkon skyid insisted.

"Oh... he didn't say anything. He just puffed into my mouth," Klu sgron murmured, afraid to reveal what had really happened.

Later, she no longer wanted to take yogurt to Bla ma 'Brong, but her mother angrily insisted, "Daughter, this is our honor. If we do this for a *bla ma* in this life, we should be glad. We will be punished by the deities if you continue to cling to such a wrong, foolish attitude."

•••

A year passed as quickly as water moves in a fast-flowing river. The mountain peaks were light-yellow, resembling a Russian beauty's hair. Grass and leaves blew aimlessly in the wind as the local herders drove their livestock to the winter camp.

"Mutton is for monks in autumn, yogurt is for brides in autumn," goes a local saying. Indeed, monks did wait for mutton and milk. Some monks put on a big smile and welcomed those they saw coming with a heavy bag along the path to the monastery.

Most visitors asked, "Does Bla ma 'Brong live here?" When the answer was negative, they kept walking, as the disappointed monks pretended to have come out to urinate. When they re-entered their domestic quarter, their smiles had evaporated.

Bla ma 'Brong enjoyed his many gifts but, sometimes odd things occur and, one beautiful morning, Bla ma noticed Klu sgron

was pregnant. Hardly able to believe his eyes he inquired, "Are you pregnant?"

Klu sgron bowed her head, her face seemingly illuminated by bright lumps of coal glowing in a fire.

"Who is your baby's father?" Bla ma 'Brong demanded.

Her bright eyes looked at him once coyly. She remained silent.

"Did you tell others about this?" Bla ma 'Brong asked.

"Nobody," Klu sgron uttered quietly.

"Good. Keep our secret in your heart forever. I will create a good destiny for the baby," Bla ma 'Brong promised.

"The government is strict about birth limits and my family is poor. Mother often asks me about the baby's father. She wants the father to live in our home. If he refuses, we will give the baby to him after it is born," Klu sgron said, tears trickling down her cheeks.

Bla ma 'Brong gently moved the prayer beads around his left wrist and said, "Go home. Tell your mother to come see me."

Bla ma 'Brong scowled, pulling the wrinkles on his forehead together, but a moment later an idea occurred to him and his eyes glinted contentedly. He unconsciously murmured, "That's right." He had recalled that Stobs Idan had entrusted him to identify his father's reincarnation.

"You needn't worship. Don't do that," he said when Mkon skyid got ready to prostrate upon her arrival. "What's your plan for your daughter?" he asked.

"I'm hoping to receive guidance from you, Lord Bla ma," Mkon skyid declared.

"How fortunate that the baby is the reincarnation of a wealthy man. The family will locate and identify the baby, who will help your family when he is an adult. Don't ask her who the baby's father is. She might commit suicide or to do something rash if you pressure her. She is young and very timid. What would you do if she really does commit suicide? It would then seem as though you had taken two lives - the girl and her unborn infant."

"Lord Bla ma, how true. What would I do if I lost my daughter?" Mkon skyid sighed, and quickly made three prostrations to Bla ma 'Brong.

The Bla ma suggested, "This business will go better if you don't talk about it to others."

•••

Spring came as it always does and it was the death anniversary of Stobs ldan's father. Stobs ldan visited the monastery and gave one hundred *yuan* to each monk and contributed 1,000 *yuan* to Bla ma 'Brong. While prostrating to Bla ma 'Brong, he said, "My dear father has gone to another world. Already one year has passed. He often appears in my dreams. Where has his soul been reborn?"

Bla ma 'Brong closed his eyes, moved his beads in his hands, and then proclaimed after a few moments, "Indeed! I promised you that he would be reborn in our village as a boy."

Stobs ldan's only reaction was to open his mouth wide for a second and then clasped his hands above his heart as a sign of devotion to Bla ma 'Brong, who kept his beads moving.

Bla ma 'Brong intoned, "Your father was reborn in Mkon skyid's family. The child's name is Chos skyong."

Two years later, Stobs ldan took Mkon skyid's family with him to the monastery to circumambulate and worship. When Bla ma 'Brong saw Chos skyong looking at a painting on the wall of the meeting hall, he went near and said warmly, "Good boy, I'll give you a lot of candy if you tell Uncle Stobs ldan that the beads around his neck belong to you. If you don't do this, you are a bad boy and I'll give you nothing."

Eager to get the candy, Chos skyong approached Uncle Stobs ldan and said, "You are wearing my prayer beads!"

"Oh, The Three Jewels! Chos skyong is my father's soul, isn't he? He surely recognizes his beads," exclaimed Stobs ldan. He took the beads from around his neck, presented them to Chos skyong, and embraced him warmly.

Startled, Klu sgron believed that each *bla ma* had his own way to save sinners from darkness, but mere mortals often just didn't

realize it. Klu sgron regretted that she had ever questioned Bla ma 'Brong.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

bakra shis དྲା-ଶିସ

bla ma པ୍ଲା-ମା

bla ma 'brong པ୍ଲା-ମା-'ବ୍ରଙ୍ଗ

chos skyong ཁୋସ-ୱୀଙ୍ଗ

don grub གୋନ୍-ଗୁବ

klu sgron གୁଁ-ସ୍ଗ୍ରଙ୍

ma Ni ମା-ନି

mkon skyid ମକ୍ଷଣ୍ଟି

oM ma Ni pad+me hUM ଔମ ମା ନି ପଦ+ମେ ହୁମ

pad+ma dbang chen ପଦ+ମା ଦଙ୍ଗ ଚେନ୍

pad+ma skyabs ପଦ+ମା ଶ୍ୟାବସ

rtsam pa ର୍ତ୍ସାମ

stobs ldan ସ୍ତୋବ୍ସଲ୍ଲାନ୍

tshul khrims ତ୍ସୁଲ ଖ୍ରିମ୍ସ

yuan 元